









THE SIREN CASKET.

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Professors I think.

to the author's respectful Comps

Arch Moore

Newington

13th April
1886

“ Ἄνδρα δ' ἀφελεῖν ἀφ' ὧν
ἔχοι τε καὶ δύναίτο κάλλιστος πο
Sophocles



“Retreating from the threatening surge
I fell into the sea ;
The rest is but a blank, - until
I ralked on the lea.”

Page 195.

THE SIREN CASKET;

OR

*THE WRECKER AND THE
MAID OF DRUM:*

Legends of Kintyre.

BY

ARCHIBALD MUNRO, A.M.

Edinburgh:

JAMES THIN, 55 SOUTH BRIDGE.

LOAN STACK

PR 5101
M 394 S5

*To the Members of the Kintyre and
Argyllshire Clubs.*

GENTLEMEN,

As a native of Kintyre, and as a Member of your Associations, whose primary object is the maintenance of the spirit of clanship and the development of mutual attachment in our fellow-countrymen, I beg to dedicate to you "The Siren Casket."

Whether "The Casket" may not be "Siren" in more senses than one I shall not venture to prejudge, but I may be allowed to state, partly in vindication of its presentation to public notice, that my resolution to describe its eventful history originated in the request of some members of your clubs, and the urgent concurrence of others.

Having enjoyed unusually favourable opportunities for acquiring a knowledge of the traditions of localities in which you have a common interest, I took advantage of a suggestion that fully harmonized with my own predilections.

Though the *form* in which I have taken a fancy to cast the sketches in the volume now before you is a metrical one, I do not claim for my stanzas the qualities of true poetry, nor even that of perfect rhyme.

Should the perusal of the following facts and fancies afford you any relaxation of spirit in a leisure hour, or wake reflections of a graver and more instructive character, the object which the Author had in view in recording them will be fully realized.

I have the honour to be,

GENTLEMEN,

Your obedient Servant,

ARCHIBALD MUNRO.

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PROLOGUE.

WHO thinks the gear that fraud procures
A satisfying boon ensures,
May from the following various tales
Find proof that better law prevails ;
That ev'n on earth waste, want, and woe
Are crops from seeds that vices sow ;
That virtues, too, their guerdon find
In prosperous thrift and peace of mind.

This truth two chroniclers of old
—A sire and son—in tales unfold—
Nor should the reader idly deem
These reliques but an airy dream ;
For, fancy's aid though they enlist,
With facts, in substance, they consist,
'Tis thus the first historian's rhymes
Disclose a chapter of his times :—

THE WRECK AT DUNAVERTY.

DUNAVERTY'S steep rugged rock
Has oft repell'd—so records boast—
The fierce invader's sturdy shock,
And fenced Argyllshire's southern coast.

From this stronghold I scann'd the strath
That sweeps from Keil to Machrimore ;
To ocean's wild capricious wrath
The strand resistless witness bore.

A gallant sloop for Greenock bound
Had miss'd her stays, and, sport of gales,
She writhed on furious surge, and found
Not aid but doom, from swelling sails !

A shroud of spray enrobed her mast,
And hid at times the craft from view ;
Oft, high above the angry blast,
Was heard the clamour of her crew.

Fierce was the wind and wild the waves
That smote the boulders of the Moil,
And frantic echoes in its caves
Bespoke their ceaseless mingled toil.

From crest to crest like lightest cork
The creaking vessel onward sped ;
Along Dunarty's massive rock
A doubtful fate her passage led.

Fairly the Waterfoot's eschew'd,
But vengeful still—his time being short,
The Spirit of the Storm pursued
And smote the craft in fiendish sport.

High on the sand her weary prow
Is hurled by wind and rolling tide ;
Yet here she finds not safety now—
No rest for her exhausted side.

Adown the slope of whirling sand
The backward rush of seething waves
The battered vessel sweeps from land,
While masts and spars the billow laves.

Short time she reel'd on boiling surf ;
Succeeding waves the charge sustain ;
On native shore—though firm and tough,
The brave " Kintyre " is split in twain.

The " Village " natives shoreward run,
And loud their joy with cheers express'd ;
No Stoic's frigid unconcern
Finds harbour in their Celtic breast.

For many a day, O ! gallant Weir,
Far-famed Southend with pride will tell
How love of health, of life, and gear,
Gave way to Suffering's loud appeal.

Nor, Lephenstrath, wilt thou disgrace
Macmillan's guerdon nobly won ;
'Mong scions of a manly race
On Glory's field he yields to none.

Towards the wreck lads brave and true
With Spartan courage—less its pride—
To save the fast-receding crew
Plung'd boldly in and stemm'd the tide.

Sprung from thy soil, fair Machririach,
The brothers Stewart due notice claim ;
For braving risk not theirs alone,
They honour still a royal name.

Mackay, the don of vale and hill,
Of nimble foot, and well-knit frame,
Was match'd by none for pith or skill,
But ever foremost in the game.

Much serv'd it now that dwelling nigh
The "Village" bay from early life,
He learn'd to swim, to float and dive,
And challenge Ocean's ruthless strife.

Discreetly train'd to meet the worst,
These heroes round them wind a rope ;
Then, fearless, all restraints they burst,
And with the ruffian surges cope.

The crew, dispersed, yet near the strand,
Th' unequal conflict ill maintain'd :
The monstrous floods their vigour spend,
Till strength and hope are almost drain'd.

Conspicuous 'mong the shipwreck'd men
A swarthy veteran near'd the shore ;
A casket firm beneath his arm
In spite of winds and waves he bore.

Refusing aid (he needed none,
Nor for his mates besought relief),
With brawny arms he breasts the main
And gains, much-spent, a shelvy reef.

A fervent joy now thrill'd the breasts
Of all spectators on the strand,
As one by one th' imperill'd wights
Are rescued by the patriot band.

But scarcely had the hearts of men
More freely throb'd, since all seem'd safe,
When, baffled in his highest aim,
Grim Neptune rush'd to clutch one waif.

The sun-burnt veteran, faint and stiff,
Where first on ground he set his foot
As statue stood, and seem'd as if
Upon the ledge he'd taken root!

On comrades (who on canvas lie,
Whose pallid cheeks sad traces bear
Of recent agony) his eye
He fix'd with rueful, hopeless stare.

An eager survey round he took,
As one that priceless gifts has lost ;
Anon his eyelids closed : he shook,
And once again on sea is toss'd.

A shriek of anguish and despair
Rose from the crowd, above the roar
Of blasts. Now, who the risk shall share
To swim at least twelve yards from shore?

The perilous triumph who shall win?
Pray, look ! five dauntless youths have spurn'd
The thought of Self ; and once again
Their footsteps seawards they have turn'd.

With noble envy four discern
That stout Mackay has ta'en the lead.
With valiant strokes he reach'd "his man,"
And grasp'd him in his utmost need.

His utmost need in sooth it seem'd ;
For twice, already, 'neath the wave
The pithless swimmer sank. Few dream'd
He might escape a watery grave.

A timeous jerk with caution rare
To surface brought the sinking head ;
Then, as a nurse that turns with care
An ailing infant on its bed,

Mackay now rais'd the face to view,
And gently, towards the shore, by turns
The floating victim push'd and drew,
While call for aid he inly spurns.

The tempest o'er thy pluck prevails,
Though strong and train'd, Mackay, you be ;
Your noted vigour plainly fails—
The course to shore you dimly see.

The Stewarts through groups their passage clave,
And dash'd anew into the brine ;
Mackay they urged himself to save,
And to their care his charge resign.

The varied feelings of the crowd,
Alternate, sway'd their looks with fear
Or hope, as ebb repell'd, or flood
The rescued and the youths brought near.

The brave deliverers welcome found
In every breast ; (their matchless feats
In many a household still resound ;
And guest to host them still repeats.)

Yet, nathless, clouded were their brows,
As cold and stiff and lifeless seem'd
The waif. To sense he's hard to rouse
Now that from Ocean he's redeemed.

Attentive, every ear was fain
To drink the sound of words he spake,
In hope some inkling to obtain,
And gather more should he awake.

Perplex'd and stunn'd, some standing round
O'erhear these ominous words with grief :
“ Don't say, MacLean, I forced you down,
Or rudely push'd you from the skiff ! ”

Fierce thoughts now o'er each bosom swept,
(Though ruth, by turns, their hearts possess'd),
As o'er their minds suspicion crept
They've nursed a viper in their breast.

Is't true that though from tempests hoarse
A murderer has got reprieve,
Yet, tainted with high Heaven's curse,
Him vengeance suffereth not to live ?

Did men a serpent's life defend
Who, seemingly, another's quench'd?
Shall mercy tend a wretch whose hand
With fellow-mortal's blood was drench'd?

Perhaps in memory still remains
His loss or toil by sea or land ;
And 'fore his inward eye grim trains
Of horrible illusions stand.

The awe-struck crowd—as is its wont—
Opposing views and parts assume :
Some cease their pity ev'n to grant,
While others friendly aid resume.

Assiduous help and generous care
Betimes their due reward obtain ;
And hopeful smile or gleesome stare
The crowd nor would nor could restrain.

By slow degrees their vital force
The stranger's languid limbs recall ;
With borrow'd help erect he rose,
And grateful looks he bends on all.

With feeble gait and furtive mien,
Supported, from the shore he wends
His way up to "the Village Inn,"—
A motley group an escort lends.

Throughout the district far and wide
The common talk on every tongue
Embraced the scenes but lately view'd,
And changeful themes that from them sprung.

The veteran's previous career,—
His native home, whence last he came,
He still conceal'd, from pride or fear ;—
None knew or even ask'd his name.

And yet a fitful, sudden start
And curious stare at times betray'd
Some anguish gnawing at his heart ;
Was't for a crime or gear mislaid?

When memory's slumbering pow'rs revived,
He ask'd, with anxious feeling moved,
If from the wreck a youth survived
Who often all but kinsman proved.

His shipwreck'd mates had left for town
(Ceannloch, that never yet has fail'd
Misfortune's sons with help to crown,
Nor recks the question whence they've "hailed").

From them no whisper ev'n was heard
Of other "hand" besides the saved ;
Nor was assuring word returned
From those who Ocean's fury braved.

The wringing hands and burdened sigh
His anguish told ; and o'er his brow
A shadow pass'd, whence one might 'spy
He felt he must 'neath troubles bow.

Fain would he certain hints secure,
Yet, still reluctant to renew
The waning wonder of the hour,
He shrank somewhat from public view.—

One day the footpath to the beach
By devious routes he backward traced ;
Then 'long the shore with watchful search,
Dejected, to and fro he paced.

'Twas then from steep Dunaverty,
Whence far and wide I sought a view,
I mark'd his movements curiously
As near its rocky base he drew.

Descending slowly down the slope,
I gauged his pace and timed my own,
Till near where branches off a road,
From others hid, we met, alone.

Th' averted look and quickened stride
In him no wish for parley show'd ;
Averse th' encounter to abide,
He nimbly jerk'd from off the road.

It chanced his cane, borne 'neath his arm,
Here noiseless dropp'd on loosest sand ;
Its fall, methought, supplied a form
And motive to take speech in hand.

My first salute—" A pleasant day " !
He answered thus : " It is indeed " ;
But, plainly loath to speak or stay,
My notice seem'd to urge his speed.

" Your stick," quoth I, " beside me lies ;
" 'Tis yours I know ; I saw it fall ;
He halted, and to my surprise
Responded blandly to my call :

" My thanks ; 'tis mine ; thus well you guess ;
" 'Twould grieve me much with it to part ; "
" No doubt," quoth I ; " its native grace
Could borrow nought from finest art.

" From other soil in foreign clime
Its life, I ween, the sapling drew ;
And, stay ! I've seen it ere this time—
So judge I from a closer view.

" Among the spoils that reach'd the strand
From ocean's waste, I mark'd this cane ;
In sooth I saved it with this hand,
Yet dreamt not I should see't again.

'Tis not for me my deeds to name,
Though yet 'tis but an honest pride,
That I the happy honour claim
Your staff to 've rescued from the tide.

" Assured 'twas yours, I brought it home
To the 'Village Inn,' with keen request,
That when enabled hence to roam
The treasure you again possess'd.

" Excuse this interruption, Sir ;
I meant not thus your steps to stay ;
My freedom may your query stir,
' Why thus *so long* your course delay ? ' "

" Apology," quoth he, " is due
In truth from me ; I frankly own
When friendly greeting came from you
Scant courtesy by me was shewn.

" But trace it not to haughty pride,
Or temper sullen and austere,
That cordial answer I denied
And shank from converse when so near.

" A forced restraint, for reasons rare,
On social converse I must place ;
Betimes, mayhap, occasion fair
To lift the veil I may embrace.

“ Yet here at least (as I perceive)
A stranger well his heart may bare,
Where every eye betokens love,
Might kindle hope 'mid dark despair.

“ I owe to brave and generous men
(In order next to Heav'n alone)
My life and schemes of worthy aim ;
This debt, my bosom, ne'er disown !

“ *Your* debtor, too, in grateful mood
I do confess myself at last ;
This brief confession, long eschew'd,
Accept, and overlook the past.—

“ A secret chamber in this rod
Contained a goodly round of notes
Of British stamp—a bank, I wot,
More safe than wallets, vests or coats.

“ Long years of residence on soils
Where fraud upholds its hateful reign ;
Where ruthless violence despoils
The guardless hand of honest gain,

 In me confirm'd a habit odd,
No doubt, to you. In sunny clime
This staff I've borne, and found it good
To stay a fiend's aggressive crime.

“ This much methought I should impart,
Because—my mind I won’t disguise—
The purpose of this rod might start
In natives here a grave surprise.

“ What time on board a ship I stepp’d,
For tedious voyages or brief,
This weapon in my grasp I kept,
And from its virtue drew relief.

“ Should tempests wreck our hapless sloop,
And drive this floating waif to shore,
Some records coil’d within its tube,
Would tell what life and name I bore.

“ My bosom swells with grateful thought,
That no unfriendly prurient hand
Has tampered with my constant prop
Since first ’twas thrown upon the sand.

“ You pick’d it up, you say, from shore,
And guarded well the treasure dear ;
Such kindness moves me to the core,
And bids me spurn intruding fear.

“ And should you deign to hear a tale
I long have lock’d within my breast,
Betimes some parts I may reveal
That thee may please and give me rest.

“ Your kindness I must still engage
The secrets I’ve made known to guard ;
And be assured your honour’s pledge
Shall fail not of its meet reward.”

“ Your ready confidence,” quoth I,
“ With answering trust I will repay ;
As magnet seeks the northern sky
My thoughts obey your weird sway.

“ Yet, sooth to tell, not I alone
Your mystery would gladly read,
Which broken phrase and plaintive tone
In parts disjointed have convey’d.

“ But meanwhile since you grant unask’d
A freedom I were loath to crave,
Permit me humbly now to test
The pledge of faith you lately gave.—

“ From scenes of sorrow and of pain
The heart instinctively recoils ;
The field that bleeding comrades stain
Allures not ev’n with promised spoils.

“ We quote as Folly’s meetest type
The giddy moth that seeks again
With shrivell’d wing the scorching light
That thrill’d its nerves with keenest pain.

“ Your partners in the recent storm
With hasty steps Ceannloch have gain'd ;
Even there, I ween, who strangers were
Have not within its gates remain'd.

“ Like others whom th' event drew here,
A looker-on, or little more,
I shrank from scenes recall'd with fear,
And shunn'd till now this horrid shore.

“ Your rapid pace I noted well,
As down yon narrow path you strode ;
It moved me—why, I cannot tell—
To test your drift and track your road.

“ If Friendship's rights I've not abused,
Mayhap you'll grant me this request :
Say, is it loss your mind confused,
Or does remorse corrode your breast ? ”

Scarce from my lips these words had pass'd
When sharp regret my bosom stung,
As vengeful looks on me he cast,
And pale with wrath his hands he wrung.

With grave respect and humble mien,
As one who wrong'd a trusting friend,
I begg'd my fault he would condone,
And friendly hand once more extend.

His scowl of rage and fancied wrong
His inward agony betray'd ;
The quivering lips and palsied tongue
Refused his mind their needed aid.

Approaching nearer, stern and slow,
With clenched teeth and threat'ning stare,
His labouring thoughts to free he strove,
And warn'd I'd no resistance dare.

Perplex'd with doubt, and dreading, too,
What might be ev'n a maniac's rage,
With wary step I backward drew
In hope thereby his wrath t' assuage.

A pace or two apart we strode,
Eye bent on eye and watchful both ;
Some pity waken'd by his mood
To break the silence made me loath.

His tongue, releas'd from brief restraint,
With horrid speech my ears assail'd :
“ Detested wretch ! with what intent
Would'st thou my secret have unveil'd ?

“ You, too, who won my confidence,
And still'd betimes my rising cares,
'Neath friendship's guise my spirit wrench,
And wake anew my dormant fears.

“ How hard to hear ! how hard to bear
The subtle tones of feign’d respect ;
Why would not Fate her frolic spare ?
Why did not I a snare suspect ?

“ My guide and solace thou did’st seem !
I hail’d thee as by Heav’n ordain’d
To quench an ever-glowing flame
A sense of crime has long sustain’d.

“ For years the grating howl of guilt
Discordant rack’d my inner sense ;
Yet still with ramparts close and thick
The noisome foe I learn’d to fence.

“ But conscience’ voice though sometimes still’d,
Oft stirs my qualms by night and day ;
And now your taunts her charge hath swell’d,
And set my deeds in dread array.

“ Why have I Cato’s courage lack’d,
And borne, resign’d, a scorpion’s sting ?
Why have I not this temple sack’d
Within whose walls hoarse furies ring ?

“ Methinks ’twere opiate to my mind
To drown this wasting fire within,
With blood of man adverse or kind,
As offering for my deeds of sin.”

Advancing fast he swore anew,
And vengeance vow'd by earth and skies ;
When from my pouch a box I drew,
And held it full before his eyes.

As when the King of Persia's land
'Mid servile courtiers drain'd the bowl,
And saw, dismay'd, the mystic hand
The page of coming doom unroll ;

Despair o'erwhelms his phrenzied head ;
His heart's arrested currents freeze ;
Alternate hues his face o'erspread,
And trembling horror smote his knees.

As when Macbeth his victim's pray'r
'Mid revel's roar would fain forget,
And strove in flambeaux' gaudy glare
His mad and bootless deeds to set,

When 'mid the din of drums and horns
He sees pale Banquo's ghastly stare,
His countenance in anguish falls—
Its pallor lays the coward bare.

So stood the stranger, faint and wan,
While on the box he fix'd his eyes ;
Down dropp'd as lead th' uplifted cane,
And every spark of passion dies.

A drowzy haze his eye bedims
As one to sleep inclined : anon
A chilly tremor seized his limbs,
A sign, I fear'd, of fatal swoon.

My danger o'er, approach I made
To prop his languid sinking frame ;
Too late ! He fell. That I delay'd
The needed help I felt with shame.

His prostrate form with grief I view'd,
And scann'd each feature of his face ;
The sight my racking doubts renew'd,
That life to fatal chill gave place.

The dreadful sign I lately saw
Of danger hanging o'er my life
Was quench'd and gone ; my fallen foe
Forbade all thought of further strife.

My self-reproaches louder grew
At want of tact and sage address :
Why would I not those themes eschew
Which early seem'd his heart to press.

I bathed his pale and icy brow ;
And 'gainst my knee I placed his head ;
But what avails my patience now ?
The man is stiff ! Perhaps he's dead !

'Twere shame to go and leave a corpse ;
Yet there was risk should I remain :
The neighbours could my footsteps trace,
And dubious facts against me strain.

By chance a boatman hove in sight ;
I hail'd him with an urgent cry ;
With quickened pace the tar-ry wight
Obey'd the summons and drew nigh.

Long used to scenes of such mishaps,
A flask from out his pouch he drew,
And plied a cordial to those lips
Again o'erspread with pallid hue.

Though coarse of mien and bred 'mong men
Of habits rough and look severe,
His bosom swell'd with generous pain,
And moved uncheck'd, the ample tear.

His gentle strength to mine he join'd ;
On sloping bank our charge we laid ;
Still no assuring symptoms show'd
Our efforts with success were paid.

My partner at this trying time
A wish express'd to seek the aid
Of learnèd skill ; and toward " the Inn "
With cumbrous step and limp he sped.

But twenty yards he scarce had paced
When, welcome to my anxious breast,
Some cheering signs of life were traced
In th' equal sigh and heaving chest.

At length the veteran oped his eyes
As one who woke from long repose ;
Noteful we watch'd with shrewd surmise,
What name he'd give us—friends or foes ?

His look betoken'd much dismay
At seeing two now at his side ;
And gloom upon his features lay
Which vainly he essay'd to hide.

Though lacking strength to rise or stand,
He yet refused our proffer'd aid ;
A wish to rest upon the sand
His glance and tone at once convey'd.

Withdrawing from the thankless rôle
Of waiting to relieve his plight,
Unheeded, from the spot we stole,
And shortly vanish'd from his sight.

But brief the space we pass'd : a mound
Of sand and broom between us lay ;
Behind this rampart big and round
For wisdom's light we inly pray.

Though now from death redeem'd, once more
A frantic whim again might tear
The bond of moral, mental pow'r,
And bid him fatal folly dare.

His raving utterance of late
Betray'd a mind unhinged, insane ;
He met our offer with a threat,
And madness might the threat sustain.

The beetling promontory nigh,
With ocean's yawning whirl below—
Strong motives to a rash design—
The throne of Reason might o'erthrow.

But not for long remained we here :
From further side of the sandy mound,
With eager and attentive ear,
We caught his footsteps' rising sound.

Approaching slowly from his lair,
On me a dubious look he fix'd ;
His fierce advance my fibres tear,
And omens dire my heart perplex'd.

Aside I turned in wary haste,
Afraid th' expected blow to stay ;
But, strangely changed, he made request
That, so, I would not turn away.

His late demeanour I recall'd,
And begg'd he now would briefly state
What served it him, or me avail'd,
If further parley I should wait.

“That you ’twill profit,” he replied,
“With me more converse here to share
I can’t affirm ; nor think, though tried,
The former wrong I could repair.

“But past experience bids me feel
In dark oblivion’s deepest shade,
My base requital you’ll conceal,
For aid bestowed in time of need.

“Much grieved, repentant and amazed
I well recall th’ unmanly part
I lately bore ; now, self-abased,
With sharpest pangs my feelings smart.

“My blood too quickly yields, I wot,
To passions sudden, fierce and strange ;
Their influence has ruled my lot,
And, much I fear, will know no change.

“Too oft indeed my passions blind
Spring merely from a groundless fear ;
’Twere sweetest solace to my mind
To find no cause more stable here.

“Your late companion now being gone—
At your suggestion, I believe—
Permit me now t’ unfold my mind,
In hope its tortures you’ll relieve.

“A casket that I long had kept
And held above the tow’ring wave,
An envious billow from me swept,
And bore ’t perchance to some lone cave.

“Extrinsic value made it dear
To me alone ; a useless box
To others, and as cheap a gear
As idly floats among the rocks.

“My struggles in the recent gale
So far o’erwhelm’d my pow’rs of mind
That memory felt her mission fail
And to the past her stores resigned.

“I’ve seen my treasure in your hand,
And would give much to have ’t again ;
Though how or when it hither found
Its way, I mote you would explain.”

“To me no duty,” I replied,
“More ample pleasure can afford
Than succour men, by troubles tried,
With active hand or friendly word.

“ And yet of favours in my pow’r
This were the last I thought you’d crave.
Its sight (less since than half an hour)
Convuls’d your heart though seeming brave.

“ Your pardon I implore if now
I hesitate to bring it forth ;
The fear to fatal ill you’d bow
Outweighs with me the casket’s worth.

“ To tell you by what means and when
The treasure came into my hands
Is easier task than to divine
Why high in your esteem it stands.

“ Yon boatman whom along the mound
You see retiring to the bay,
On distant beach the relic found,
And to “ the Village ” took ’t away.

“ Referred to me (I wist not why)
By all to whom the box he show’d,
He gave it me, and begg’d I’d try
To have it carefully bestow’d.

“ No other eyes than mine and his
The casket (since ’twas lifted) saw,
I gladly now restore it ; please
Receive it now with scarce a flaw.

“ A happier hour my fancy sued
To cheer your breast and sate my own ;
But ah ! how oft do pleasures wooed
The suitor’s hopes and vows disown !

“ I conjured up your joyous smile
When you the relic should regain ;
What visions would your woes beguile
And bid, for sorrows, rapture reign !”

“ Be silent o’er its wonders, friend,”
The veteran begg’d with sullen tone ;
Allusions but my soul offend—
So, prythee, let the theme alone !

“ My weary fears and doubts dispel
By handing me the casket dear ;
Suspicious then will flee my soul,
And confidence shall follow fear.”

From out beneath an ample cloak
I drew it forth. With beaming eye
And nervous grasp the box he took,
And gave for thanks a laden sigh.

Then having scann’d its well-known form,
Its lid with fervent lips he press’d ;
And fixing it beneath his arm
He hurried from the hillock’s crest.

WHINNYHILL FAIR.

FOR Whinnyhill at Whitsuntide,
From Campbelton and country side
Large crowds come trooping to the "Fair,"
To sell their gear or purchase ware.

Thither the swain who thought he fared
But ill, with former chums or laird,
Betook himself to change his lot—
A worse exchange, as oft as not.
And there the buxom, bouncing maid
Her radiant looks and brows display'd,
Content to take a smaller fee
If near the farm a kirk should be!
A deeper game her rivals guess:
Her sweetheart first had changed his place.

And truant urchins fled their schools,
Their peeries, tops, their books and bools;
To see the Fair and taste its joys,
And quote the modes of manhood boys;
To claim as friends—or something more—
The wights they ne'er had seen before.

The hinted fairin' often came
From donors ignorant of their name.
With thanks profuse from lip and heart,
On other raids the schemers start.

There stallions, chestnut, black, and grey,
Are busk'd with ribbons rich and gay.
Their lofty necks and neighing loud
From knowing judge and partial crowd
The proud unanimous verdict gain :
The native breed their fame maintain.

The neighbouring hills and valleys round
The Fair's tumultuous din resound,
As furious drovers veer about,
And to their flocks and collies shout ;
And stubborn stirks that leap the fence
Are whack'd with rungs to teach them sense ;
The precept wants example's force—
The doctrine's preach'd with many a curse.
The sceptic brutes pursue their course,
And man and beast from bad get worse.

Cantankerous curs of various breed,
In brawls and growls the chorus lead ;
Pugnacious loons fierce quarrels pick,
And settle them with fist or stick ;
And many a chiel in quarrel nice
A trifle marred his market price.

Beside gorse tufts where veins have bled,
Exhausted heroes find a bed.
Some victors, heartless, court applause,
For triumphs o'er their weaker foes ;
While others tender—yet as brave—
Their victims' painted temples lave ;
And just as if 'twas all a sham,
The feud they solder with a dram.

There in a crowd "cheap John" declares
No gear on earth can beat his wares.
In confidence he tells the mob
His rival is a Lowland snob,
Who, fleeing justice, left his home,
And to Ceannloch has lately come.
The crowd are warn'd, both big and small,
To shun the fugitive's trashy stall,
Lest, buying what was got by guile,
They'll share his company in the jail.
The quack thus plies the wordy game—
His neighbour does the very same.

The guileless trust the scheming pair,
And part with cash they ill can spare ;
Yet wonder when the Fair is o'er,
The traders join in merry splore.
Like brothers more than rivals keen,
On loving terms the pair are seen.

Coofs next suspect—then find it true—
They've sold their wares and buyers too !

Full many a truant's hoarded pence
Reward the rivals' eloquence !
And—worst of all—the victims fear
To carry home the purchased gear,
Lest cuffs and counsels torture add
To sense of ruin—by a cad !

Still livelier scenes the tents possess'd,
Where comrades tasted drink and rest.
Here farmer, shepherd, hind, and laird,
Th' inspiring gifts of Bacchus shared.

Distinctions in the social scale
At kirk or farmstead may prevail,
But generous draughts efface the line
Where stately ease and service join ;
Benevolence streams from every heart
To friends or strangers in the mart.

For strangers, too, this day are here
Who've not been seen for many a year,—
Strangers in name, but not in sooth,
For here they spent their hopeful youth.

Mindful of joys youth only knows,
Homeward our spirit's current flows,

With sanguine hope—(a hope how vain !)
To feel youth's raptures o'er again.

Amid a group of time-worn wights,
Well tried in trade or skill'd in fights,
A swarthy veteran held a seat,
Who gat and gave, in turn, a "treat ;"
But sparingly the drink would sip
Though oft he raised it to his lip.
Little he mingled in the din
Where wit and humour flowed with gin ;
Noteful he scann'd each reader's face,
As if some memory he could trace ;
Attentive every speech he caught,
But said not what he knew or thought ;
While others who were long abroad
Detail'd the courses they had trode ;
Related ventures they had made
On sea, in war, or foreign trade ;
Till, deem'd of wisdom's root possess'd,
(As silent lips at times suggest)
He won importance with his mates,
And each for him his tale relates.

Mackillop of the Heather House,
Whom foaming draughts began to rouse,
Above the tent's tumultuous roar
Narrates this warning scene of yore :

“ Lang syne a husband, fagg’d with strife,
Forsook his craft, his bairns and wife,
And took the road with hasty stride
Ere Bell his wife his scheme could chide.
To Whinnyhill his course he bent
To taste the solace of the tent.
Snugly esconced among his chums
He vows—be ’t weal or woe that comes—
His half-a-crown with friends to share,
Defying wife, and debt and care.
But when he changed the coin with pride
He found his Mentor at his side !
The tempting change she deftly clutch’d,
And both his pouch and honour touch’d
‘ You’ve store of wealth, my bonnie man,
To waste on trash ye scarce can stan’,
Ye sware your purse was toom as air
The very night before the Fair ;
Ye deaved your wife for ae half-croon
To buy a hymn-book in the toon !
I see the gate my gift has gane,
And brawly ken the book ye mean.
Nae doot ye think it’s greater merit
To skip the book and mind the spirit.
Let spirits, then, your courage rouse
To bear the counsel of your spouse :
When next ye mean your care to droon,
Gie less for change than half-a-croon.”

M'Kendrick, too, of Auchinloan,
 With watchful eye yet jaunty tone,
 In th' vet'ran's ear a story pours,
 On purpose cull'd from Memory's stores:—

“Mactavish, down from Killoogroor,
 Was parch'd with travel, heat and stoor;
 When near this spot the clansman drew
 The tempting tent stood full in view.
 He'd fain go “in” to slake his thirst
 With kindred worthies—if he durst.
 But fortune bound him to a colt
 Whose ruling passion was—to bolt.
 His stiff dilemma Cracken notes
 (How many a rogue th' example quotes!)
 ‘I'll hold your horse, while you are in,’
 The vagrant utters with a grin.
 ‘You're kind, my boy,’ replies the swain,
 And hands the youth the hempen rein.
 ‘And here's a fairin' to yoursel,
 Ye're needin' siller like mysel.’—
 He doled a shilling soil'd and worn,
 But ask'd and got its half in turn.
 ‘Noo, should a stranger come along—
 Ye'll easy ken him by his tongue—
 If like a dealer he appear,
 And for Mactavish bluntly spier,
 Send some one in to let me know

And he shall have his fairin', too.'
A bargain's struck—the swain's at ease ;
And terms and fee the laddie please.

“ A minute later, ere the clown
Could quaff his glass, or e'en sit down,
The colt and rider clove the air
Some furlongs off beyond the Fair.
John Gilpin's steed could scarce out-do
The pace at which the charger flew.
By “ Hungry House ” and Stewarton Inn
The shoeless naig outstripp'd the win' ;
Then madly swerving to the right,
O'er Aros Moss she strain'd her flight.
At eve, a hare-skin cap was found
Beside a ditch in peaty ground ;
The racer, riderless, was seen
To crop the Durry pastures green.

“ Meanwhile, a horsey gent appeared,
And for Mactavish duly spier'd.
An urchin who had got his cue,
Into the tent abruptly flew,
Where happy Dan of Killogroor,
O'ercome with ale, enjoy'd his snore.

“ From slumber roused by pinch and tug,
He eyed, chagrin'd, the emptied jug ;

Anon his monitor with glee
Requests and gets the promised fee.
Clodhopper gives the spurious plack
The sly contractor gave him back.

“ Returning to the crowded plain,
Dan seeks his colt, but seeks in vain.
He miss'd his man—he missed his brute ;
He's lost the day and beast, to boot.
Against his loss he's blandly told,
Himself, if not his colt, is sold !

“ Thus moorland coofs or borough knaves
Nor glaiKET trust nor cunning saves ;
And he who rides too fast or far
May both his peace and fortune mar.”

Here asks the vet'ran, with a smile,—
“ Is't oft you thus the time beguile ?
In screeds on rogues or simple clown
Why needs your tale a moral crown ?”

Whether the smiles that lit his face
Were signs of pleasure or distress
Were best unsaid—we'll leave 't untold,
Till further facts the case unfold.

Charm'd though they were by scraps they heard
The cronies sterner themes preferr'd ;

A night they fix to meet again,
 When peace and leisure they'll obtain,
 Traditions old and rare to rake
 From memory—for the stranger's sake.

Assembled in th' Argyll Hotel,
 They, each in turn, their legend tell.
 Macmurchy, of "The Backs," began,
 And thus his martial story ran :—

A STIFF ENCOUNTER.

Where big Drumore and mossy Moy
 Unite their margins brown,
 Close to the shoal canal that join'd
 Drumlemble with the town.

(Dear old canal !* whose sluggish pool,
 In summer's sultry day,
 Oft cool'd my limbs and braced my nerves
 For study or for play ;

On whose rough surface bound by frost
 In youth I used to slide,
 With keener zest than laird or lord
 Did e'er in carriage ride.)

* See The Old Canal.

One summer's eve two neighbour lads
That herded near each other,
For friendly chat, as was their wont,
Reposed them on the heather.

Macgregor, herd-boy of the Moy,
Claimed kindred with the North ;
His sires in many a foray bore
The gree for pluck and worth.

Well could he, too, the blow return
That stung his swarthy cheek ;
Who plied one quarrel with this wight
Would scarce a second seek.

Yet little courted he the strife
That leads to weals and scars ;
And much he loathed the nagging phrase
That sweet acquaintance mars.

His neighbour neatherd, of Drumore,
From Lowland district "hail'd,"
Of fair complexion, glib of tongue,
Of firm and burly build.

Proud of his country and his name—
The famous name of Mace,
He tired the echoes as they rang
With pæans of his race.

“ Macgregor,” so the lad would say,
“ What barren scenes are yours !
And yet you laud your Whinnyhills,
Your lochs and rugged shores.

“ No stately floods like Ayr or Clyde
Enrich your listless plains ;
Your churlish soil the grove abhors
And rural grace disdains.

“ Your heathy moors and scrubby hills
But sorry pasture yield ;
Your stunted flocks and herds betray
The bare and meagre field.

“ Your dwarfish cows are lenten gear,
Nor flesh nor milk bestow ;
Your bulls have neither pluck nor form
For battle or for show.”

A look of anger, mix'd with shame,
Flash'd from the clansman's eye,
Who, zealous for his country's fame,
Returned the tart reply :—

“ You've seen but little of the breed
You treat with scant respect ;
And that they lack nor pith nor speed
Tormentors soon detect.

“To me it seems” (so adds the Gael)
“You start a bootless theme ;
’Tis hid from me what end ’twould serve
Should we discuss the same.

“Your estimate of this our land
Is true—for aught I care,
In giving it its form and soil
It chanced I had no share.

“And yet some virtue it must have
Despite of all you’ve said ;
Else how does ’t happen that so well
You fatten on its bread.

“Our cattle’s pluck you underrate,
As you should shortly see,
Were these our several bulls allow’d
To counter on the lea.

“But ill ’twould us become—the ‘herds’—
Our masters’ Trust to mar ;
For skaitless don’t such brutes return
If once they meet for war.”

“Your plea is hollow,” answered Mace,
The herdsman of Drumore ;
And well you know the shaggy beasts
Can neither push nor gore

“ I'm sure, at least, if now they met,
To try their feckless pith,
Your haggard brute would soon turn tail
Or roll upon the heath.”

Provoked by shafts so quick and keen,
Macgregor knit his brows,
Yet nods assent to test their bulls
Beside the Whinny Knowes.

The herdsmen start for diff'rent fields,
Impress'd with hopes or fears,
From peaceful pastures to the “ ring ”
To drive their champion steers.

Sullen at first the brutes obey
The hint to shift their ground ;
And slowly paced till each his foe
At narrow distance found.

Hoarse grumbling murmurs tore the air
As nearer still they drew ;
Large spritty clods from tearing hoofs
In showers around them flew.

“ The Moy's ” proud, stubborn, pawing brute
A sable colour wore ;
A comelier head on sturdy neck
A combatant ne'er bore.

Of dunnish hue and deeper chest,
Drumore's "pride" shows his form ;
His lusty roar his ardour proves
To face the coming storm.

But in proportion as the brutes
Their bellowing brag increased.
The rival lads' misgivings rose,
Their wordy bluster ceased.

With steady pace and level head
The scowling pair advance ;
Their horrid threats the welkin wakes ;
Their eyes with fury glance.

At length, when but a dozen yards
Their ponderous fronts divide,
Each halted, and through shaggy tufts
His eager rival eyed.

And though defiance each proclaimed
With pride and noisy scorn,
With grim respect each view'd a foe
So worthy of his "horn."

More bent on battle, Drumore's pet
The forward march renew'd ;
While lighter "Moy," with staying pow'r,
His enemy's progress view'd.

With wisest thrift each combatant
Now husbanded his breath ;
Now both had ceased to rend the air
And trench the frowsy heath.

Well fared it with the nimbler "weight"
That higher ground he chose :
As slope and pith their aid combined
To stem the other's blows.

A heavy plunge th' assailing beast
Directed on his foe ;
But a ready stand on vantage ground
Repels the weighty blow.

Rebuff so stout, severe and quick,
Served more the brute to tease,
Till fresh attacks his foe hurls back,
And brings him to his knees.

Stung by repulse the baffled bull
With vengeful fury burn'd ;
And, changing tactics, round he wheel'd,
And Moy's position turn'd.

And now the battle fiercely raged
By turns on slope and plain ;
Though both recoil'd from stunning blows,
They rallied soon again.

From brow and neck, from flank and cheek,
Down flow'd the purple tide ;
But tardy victory for long
Inclined to neither side.

But by-and-bye the ponderous force
Of the champion of Drumore
Over his slim antagonist
The marks of triumph bore.

Severely bruise'd by fell assaults
From his doure remorseless foe,
Moy's champion plainly yields the field
With grudging step and slow.

His restless victor, bruise'd as well,
His clear advantage press'd,
And drove his languid enemy
O'er slope and hillock's crest.

The vanquish'd, wheeling just half-round,
Exposed his battered flank,
And sought relief from further charge
'Mong sedges high and rank.

A better, unexpected shield
The fugitive obtain'd :
A cow, then rushing from a brake,
The victor's charge sustain'd.

This respite gain'd in nick of time,
The beaten bull improved ;
For off to well-known moory haunts
With sullen pace he moved.

Now here the fray should duly cease,
And bulls and " herds " take rest,
Had not Iago reach'd the " ring,"
And learn'd the treat he miss'd.

Determined to redeem his loss,
And stir another feud,
The merits of the ended fight
He craftily review'd :—

" Look here, Macgregor," quoth the loon,
With sly persuasive art,
" Could *you* not on this battle-field
Enact a second part ?"

" In slighter cause you've won renown
On other plains before ;
The honours yielded by your bull
Your fists might now restore.

" And, Mace—whose pride in turn he fed—
You'd win a double prize,
If smart Macgregor's hide you drubb'd,
And painted both his eyes.

For different issues thus proposed—

Retrieve or double fame—

The simple gudgeons took the bait,
And play'd the tempter's game.

All modes and rites in battle's strife

The sapient umpire wist ;

For *melée*, trick, or noisy row

This patron never miss'd.

In prompting Mace to goad his "man,"

Or challenge him at least,

He muttered : "Give the 'fuge,'* or count

The buttons on his vest."

Obedient to the "ruling pow'r,"

And to his instincts true,

Mace touch'd the buttons in the row—

They numbered only *two* !

Scarce had he press'd the upper boss—

The nearest to the breast—

When the reckoner's eye, instead of two,

Saw buttons *four* at least.

A blow straight from the shoulder hurl'd

From fell Macgregor's fist,

Enlightened Mace's optic nerve,

And stretched him in the dust.

* A challenge by a slight touch from the hand.

Convinced by proof so swift and sure,
'Twere vain to bandy blows,
The braggart, growling, own'd defeat,
And from his lair arose.

Sly motives to renew the fray
Iago now supplied ;
Now he appeal'd to Mace's height,
Now to his name and pride.

But dark Macgregor's sturdy form
For warfare still prepared,
Repressed aggression from his foe,
And further conflict spared.

(The battle o'er, the combatants,
Amazed and stunn'd, reflect
How both were made the dupes of one
Whom either could have lick'd.

So felt the tempter, too, it seems,
For ere his puppets turn
To take revenge, the prompting knave
Had bolted for Witch-burn.)

Thus equal honours (bull's or herd's)
Drumore and Moy secure.
Anon the champions quit the "ring,"
And seek their several moor.

But much it gall'd Macgregor's breast,
As homeward thence he trod,
To find his helpful crumpled cow
Stretch'd, gasping on the road !

The rude but unexpected blow
One bull at th' other aim'd
Has done its work : poor crummie lies
A hopeless waif, and maim'd.

Grateful for aid she lately served
His vanquish'd bull to shield,
Her "herd" preserved her dexter horn
To blow't on moor and field.

For threescore seasons, late and ear,
In weather hoarse or still,
Macgregor blew the relic horn
From far-seen Whinnyhill.

And whistling lads and chanting maids,
When blasts the signal gave,
At morn, from town, drove up their cows,
And brought them back at eve.

That horn fulfils its "mission" still,
The clannish crowd to draw :
Now rallying Natives own its spell
On the banks of Broomielaw.

“Kintyre Club,” the relic guard
 That past to present joins ;
 Your fathers’ memories the horn
 In silvered grace enshrines.

SONG :—THE WHINNYHILL HORN.

I BLOW with my horn, and the echoes awake
 That slumbered in caverns afar ;
 I hear their replies as their circuit they make
 From the Pans to the Isle of Davaar.

Chorus.

Come, list ye my horn, who manfully spurn
 The spell of the sluggard’s repose ;
 The rays of the morn Bengullion adorn,
 And the Laggan with radiance glows.

Now drive up your cows to the green Whinnyhill,
 Ye laddies and lassies in town ;
 ’Mong brackens and whins let the herd roam at will,
 Till the sun in Atlantic goes down.

Chorus—Come, list ye my horn, &c.

The horn of the sportsman and trumpet of war
 On the battlefield, valley, or heath,
 Forbode but the deadly artillery’s roar
 Or herald the havoc of death.

Chorus—Come, list ye my horn, &c.

But mine is the horn of Plenty and Peace,
The symbol of love and good-will ;
Their health and their wealth and their wisdom
increase,
Who answer my blast from the hill.

Chorus—Come, list ye my horn, &c.

May its crescent the emblem of friendship suggest,
And wind it from even till morn ;
And when in the welkin its echoes have ceased
They'll sing of the Whinnyhill horn.

Chorus—Come, list ye my horn, &c.

His legend here Macmurchy ends,
Then from Molloy a tale demands ;
Molloy, a Maltster in Mill-Knowe,
Returned the laird a gracious bow ;
And braced with pith of mountain dew,
Of other times these sketches drew :—

HOGMANAY.

THE long'd for, pray'd for, welcome night
 Was ushered in with meagre light ;
 And clouds at times conceal'd from sight
 The planets, stars, and moon.
 So much the better for the "lark"
 Who's bent on mischief to embark,
 Whose "trade" thrives briskest in the dark,
 As owners know ere noon.
 It was the night of Hogmanay,
 The choice of all the year,
 When fun and frolic have their sway
 Without restraint or fear ;
 When dandies and randies
 For festal scenes forgather,
 And wander and daunder
 They care not—spier not whither.

This night the stiff important laird,
 Who oft on "want" has coldly stared,
 Descends to own the houseless caird
 As man and fellow brother ;
 And should not, pray, the closing year
 Remind the peasant and the peer
 That, viewing mortals' brief career,
 One rank 's as frail 's another ?

Kind Fortune with a various hand
 Befriends the saint and knave ;
She makes the landlord prize his land,
 The tinker hug his cave ;
While losses and crosses
 All Adam's sons attend
To prove them, and move them
 Their sympathy to lend.

For good, time-honoured scenes and rites,
For timber, peat, and tar-barrel lights,
For fisticuffs and wordy fights
 The younger brats prepare ;
For twelvemonth's toil they take revenge ;
From servants now to lords they change ;
O'er Discord's realm they freely range,
 And tire the patient air.
Each corner, street, or narrow lane
 A rendezvous supplies,
Where schemes of daring tax the brain
 Of boys of every size ;
Rewarding and guarding
 The wildest plans proposed ;
Denouncing and pouncing
 On coofs to peace disposed.

Around the sacred bluish stone
(Borne from the Isles some ages gone)

That lures the tourist to the Town,
 — Iona's sculptured cross,—
 Rough harum-scarum groups have met
 On frantic mirth or plunder set,
 And in the scramble gear to get,
 Whoe'er should bear the loss.
 The watchman sees the coming storm,
 But kindly passes by ;
 No thought has he to give th' alarm
 By rattle, sign, or "cry."
 He would not, he could not
 Arrest tar-finger'd Cloutie,
 Though this night and ilk night
 He faced him at his "duty."

A model of policeman, he
 Connived at vagrants big or wee ;
 Saw not what others buist to see
 Without the use of "specks ;"
 Although in open broad daylight
 He feigns to collar firm and tight
 The most suspected scape-grace wight,
 Or rogue of either sex ;
 A tardy step towards Tolbooth
 Is all the law shall gain ;
 Depend on't, neither man nor youth
 Will Colin e'er "run in."

Though worried—thrice married !
 On few could “Bobbie” frown :
 This fine man was kinsman
 To nearly half the town.

Beside the cross are gathered bands
 From alleys, closes, rows, and “lands,”
 A team of Madawaska’s * “hands,”
 With fisher lads in tow ;
 There’s folk from Greenland and Gartgrillan,
 From neighbouring clachan, hut, and shieling,
 From Calliburn and Ballywillin,
 And droves from Kilmahoe.
 Peninver, Smerby, and the Rhoin,
 Drumlemble and Drumore,
 The Lossit, Pans, and Auchinhoan
 Send callants by the score.
 The Learside and Largieside
 The foremost place contest ;
 And Tangy and Langa
 Claim record with the best.

The shepherd’s hut on Bordadhu,
 The sheltered mill at Killarow,
 The smugglers’ “toor” at Mulachdoo
 Their tenants miss’d awhile ;

* A well-known Brig.

And squads from Machrihanish Bay
 Forsake their cod-lines for a day,
 And to Ceannloch they plod their way
 O'er moorland, road, and stile.
 And gamekeepers from Pennygown
 And from Bengullion's back,
 Neglect their work and seek the town,
 E'en should they "get the sack."
 Kilkeddan, Dalvraddan
 Are seldom far behind,
 Whenever, wherever
 The scent is in the wind.

(Kilwhipnach too had sent a couple,
 As ardent, sturdy, trig, and supple,
 As ever spank'd o'er lea or stubble
 To markets, kirks, or fairs,
 Had they not ta'en a whim for horses,
 To hain their own good brawny forces,
 And saddled beasts (and what still worse is
 —The fillies were not theirs !)
 To count your chickens ere they're hatch'd
 May be with stolen fillies match'd ;
 For steeds and riders may be scratch'd
 Before the race begins.
 And colts o'er lads will have their fun,
 And shrewdly take their measure,
 And gowks who try their capers on
 May rue them at their leisure.

And quickly and meekly,
The fact our birkies own,
When the fillies the billies
Had neatly overthrown.

One three year old of thrawart will,
And birsy as the Whinnyhill,
The saddle spurn'd, nor would stand still
As t'other party reckon'd ;
Her partner scheming (for the nonce)
To lead their pests a bonnie dance,
Took on the riders, both at once,
With a straw-seat for the second ;
A pace or two the gipsy strode,
Though smarting from this saddle ;
Then, rearing, stumbled off the road
Into the byre puddle.
In this hole—this cess-pool—
The trig knights-errant lay,
And tasted but “blasted”
Their happy Hogmanay !)

In smaller coteries apart,
Were clustered jokers mild or tart ;
And Lawyer wags with phrases smart,
And gift of ready lingo ;
A graver set (so let us say)
From quiet homes would hither stray,

And some—a few e'en turning grey—
 Were students from St Mungo.
 That Matter yields to force of Mind
 They've heard Professors say,
 But active samples here they find
 —And not a fee to pay !
 Latinity, Divinity,
 A week the students shun ;
 'Tis fine sport, as time's short,
 To share in sturdy fun.

High o'er the din that rent the air
 M'Quilkan with the stiff red hair
 From off a cask for lack of chair
 His fellows thus harangued :
 “Once more, my peers, I'll lead your force,
 And aid you with my voice and purse
 (That it's so light I owe a curse
 To some that should be hang'd).
 Twelve months have come and fled away
 —Just like your cash and mine—
 Since last we made our lieges pay
 The tithe of Auld Lang Syne.
 This night then, each wight then,
 Shall make his yearly call,
 To hail them, and tell them
 You wish them happy all.

Your compliments you'll meekly make
At house of magnate, priest, or rake,
And seem as if just for their sake

Your visit you have paid ;
And if our ancient guild they own,
And for neglect and slights atone,
Return the lowest bow you can,
To mistress, miss, or maid.

But should some sour and narrow churl

For bread give you a stone,
And both at you and cronies hurl

The taunts themselves have won,
Then loudly, and proudly,

Parade your views and merit :
Remind them you find them
But curs of dogged spirit !”

Anon the crowds in groups disperse,

And vow in stanzas rough but terse,

And signals full of warning,
That should they meet a “ Polish ”-man
They'll break his neck and muckle bane,
And won't go home till morning.

The royal sentiment 's encored

In tenor notes and bass,
From shore to hill the strain is roar'd,
E'en should a bailie pass.

Loud cheering, nought fearing,
In banded force they go,
Supremely, serenely,
Defying high and low.

Battalions of this motley crew
Elsewhere their hosts together drew,
And quite as clamorous trumpets blew
To swell the dinsome throng ;
And many a chief of local fame,
Whose feats were grander than his name,
Was drill'd in tactics for his game
Through chorus, dance, and song.
And hopefuls who had little cash
And more who had not any
Were promised, for some brilliant dash,
We'll say—*an honest penny*.
Their leaders were feeders
Who fed their native pluck,
Declaring and sharing
(In hope !) their wondrous luck.

My faithful quill, in fadeless ink
These leaders' names to glory link ;
Preserve them till Bengullion sink
In grand Kilkerran Bay.
The more so as, the truth to tell,
From modesty or—very well ;—

For old MacFadyen's borough bell
 These worthies ne'er did pay,
To herald through or round the town
Where during night they laid them down,
Or where at morning they had flown
 To muse, to watch, and prey !
True genius ever courts the shade
For thought and circumspection,
And spurn the strut of vain parade
 For action and reflection.
Contemning, condemning,
 The pride of public "state,"
They speculate and meditate
 At Wisdom's coy retreat.

Come forth, Mactaggart of "The Shore,"
(Old, honour'd "Shore," where dwelt of yore
A maid inspiring sweeter lore
 Than goddess, sylph, or fairy ;
Still hallow'd is the street she paced,
The modest home she sweetly graced,
The walls where shadows softly traced
 The form of—Highland Mary.

Oh ! Burns, had Fate then sent you here
 On love and fun intent,
When golden hours beside your "dear"
 In rapture you had spent,

Then, Son of Mirth, you'd sally forth
 To this night's queerish scene ;
 Your noteful eye would soon descry
 Another Halloween ;
 And mind you, you'd find, too,
 In Campbelton many a hinnie
 As chary as Mary,
 And quite as sweet and bonnie)

Come forth, Mactaggart of "The Shore,"
 The best of pleaders at a door,
 And lead the noisy fervent corps
 That fronts the Mason Lodge.
 MacCualisky of Dalintober,
 A lad of taste—just say, a toper—
 The wale of guides, as long's he's sober,
 To parley, fence, and dodge ;
 M'Kinlay, his Lieutenant, too,
 His kail-runt baton wields,
 And calls on veterans to renew
 Their raids on ancient fields.
 There's Tom Rae from Broombrae,
 And Wylie of Lochend ;
 And Huie and Bowie,
 Official counsels lend.

Old Dalaruan's shaggy chiel,
 The lusty sutor Dooggy Neil,

Who traces bore from brow to heel
Of many a glorious fray ;
With Caine, a scion of Mill-Knowe,
Mainspring of every local row,
A lucky fugitive till now
From jail and Botany Bay.
To Roading skill the night gave scope
In Brisslan, Dean, and Hair ;
To clap a slab on chimney top,
None could with them compare.
M'Culloch and Tulloch
"The Parliament Square" beset,
Recounting, discounting
Past spoils—and more to get !

To business now the hordes proceed,
And ply their trade with zeal and speed,
And crave the mite some scarcely need
—The honest truth to say :

"Rise up, guid wife, and shake your feathers,
And dinna think that we are beggars,
For we, as neighbours and as brothers,
Are come for Hogmanay."

Such was the burden of the song
They chanted at each door ;
Then coins were shower'd on the throng
From purses fat and poor.

A penny coin or any boon
 The strollers ne'er would spurn ;
 While loud thanks from proud ranks
 The donors got in turn.

What envious Imp could Scrubb provoke
 In sportive vein or churlish joke,
 At fiery blades his fun to poke,
 And give for bread a stone?
 Nut shells the niggard madly flung
 The hearty cheering lads among,
 And added with a nagging tongue :
 "Ye begging cads, begone."
 But dearly paid he for his jest
 Ere night gave place to-day ;
 Two birkie's down his chimney press'd
 A dripping swathe of hay !
 With sound cord they bound hard
 His door to that of "wee Moll ;"
 And smoked him and' chok'd him
 By puffing through the keyhole.

Kate Blues bestows a kebbuck fell
 Dan Drain had sent just for hersel' ;
 Kind Kate would e'en her "crummie " sell
 To treat the bonnie chiels ;
 And Sibbie of the orange stall
 Invites the callants to her hall,
 And shares her store among them all,
 Though whiles she dubb'd them deils ?

Tam Gilkie sacrificed his crate
Of fozy fizzing Gortchan peat
To light the tar-barrel in his street,
 Where he could glow'r and gaze.
Old Cooper Bauldy gave them spales,
And Fisher Hecky scraps of sails,
And Dairy Jean two hoopless pails
 To spread the glorious blaze ;
Thick farles of cake and barley scones
 Were gifts of Pate the Miller ;
And Baker Bess with toothsome buns
 Threw out some bits of siller.
And lozens and raisins
 Were flung to them in papers ;
The dainty bits the canty chits
 Requite with songs and capers.

And when did Beith his pocket close,
When kirk or other worthy cause
Its waning fund or merit shows
 And to the pouch appeals ?
Through spectacles just wiped anew
Fond on the throng he strained his view :
Then coins in gowpens out he threw
 And shower'd them on their heels.
The Provost, foremost of his race,
 Relax'd his awful state ;

(And Madame, too, with envied grace
 Stood smiling at the gate).
 He offers no " terrors
 To evil doers " now ;
 Politely, delighted,
 He gives his purse and bow.

And Magistrates both old and young
 On lips of rampant spouters hung,
 And join'd in chorus when they sung
 " We'll not go home till morning !"
 Well guess'd the noisy randie core
 That till the Social Season's o'er
 For mischief done they'll get no more
 Than just a feckless warning.
 And louder near their doors they roar'd
 With phrase of reckless mirth ;
 The Law and Judge they threw o'er board
 And Licence ruled the Earth !
 No master nor pastor
 Their freedom shall restrain :
 For any ill they know well
 An amnesty they'll gain.

Some other magnates of the place
 Shell'd out a shilling—sometimes less.
 But Deacon Will with smirking face
 Would try the mode genteel :

“Ye’re welcome, chaps ;” then mildly adds,
The “ Compl’ments o’ th’ season, lads ;”
Then, muttering, growls, “ I’d hang the cads
 Could I but have my will.”

Two blades o’erheard the currish speech,
 And vow’d he’d soon repent it ;
Soon showers of eggs his taste impeach—
 The eggs a trifle scented !

Approaching and coaxing,
 He tried to check the pother ;
While John Meek smote one cheek,
 Mackinven smear’d the other.

Anon the Tolbooth tenor clock
The passing year’s last hour had struck,
When chums their hands in friendship lock,
 And wish a gude new year.

First-footers plied their ancient trade,
On hall and cottage made a raid,
And drank the health of wife and maid
 In phrases kind but queer.

From frequent “ toasts ” Precentor Tom,
 To leeward often swerv’d ;

He ask’d M’Cracken for the home,
 Where Madge his sweetheart serv’d.

The marplot, chuckling at his chance,
 Gives guidance false and wrong,

And stirs the inmates of the manse,
 With ringing loud and long.

With terror, with horror,
Tom hears the pastor roar :
“Precentor, get hence, sir—
Precent to me no more.”

O rare and quick is whisky's pow'r !
It changes natures in an hour ;
Makes sad the glad, makes sweet the sour,
Till folks scarce know their kin.
In Bolgam Street, Mike met a mate
Whom oft he met both ear and late,
But scarcely would a moment wait,
To ask his neighbour *in*.
But now they've had three gills together,
And feel their magic spell ;
They're knit like spouses to each other,
And deepest secrets tell.
An “entry” leads them to their door,
And to and fro they pace,
And both eternal friendship swore,
In loving tight embrace.
Thus fuddled, thus muddled,
Each oped the other's door !
Dumfounder'd, they entered
Abodes unseen before !

Oh ! Nell M'Keich, what elfin wrought
Within your brain the blund'ring thought

To hide the flask your husband bought,
And fill'd with Colville's whisky?
And in its stead to hand your man
A flask to treat Macnab and clan,
His social spouse and drouthy son,
With liquor weak and risky.
Pure water from the best of springs,
In haste they quaff from glasses;
But soon the draught convulsions brings,
And back through gullets passes!
You see well the three, Nell,
Were quite unused to water;
In faith, ma'am, your death, ma'am,
Seemed hanging on the matter!

Yet worse it fared with Lachy Coag—
A dupe at times, but mostly rogue,—
Who bore as gift to Hughie Logue
A bottle charg'd with "feints";
Swith, in his mission ever keen,
He eyed a bottle near a screen,
As like his own as bean to bean,
And for't his bosom pants;
The bottles deftly he exchanged—
A lucky "move" he guess'd;
With boundless swing his fancy ranged
O'er "pulls" of Hughie's "best."
He hied him to the Quarry hole
And gulp'd two gills or more;

Much vex'd he ne'er got drunk at all,
 Yet feared his days were o'er !
 A Doctor was sought for
 Who hung him by the heels ;
 Then squeez'd him, releas'd him
 Of three once wriggling eels.

But list ! The cart and barrel of tar
 Proclaim their action from afar ;
 The flames eclipse the brightest star—
 The crowd's loud roar is heard.
 That barrel—the chief of festive gear—
 Lay deep in limbo half a year ;
 But how secured—pray, never spier
 At th' owner or the bard.
 At Bauldy Bryde's old "corner" stand
 The leader waves his magic wand,
 And such as could their knees command
 Stood bolt upright to hear :
 " My comrades of the fiery race,
 This precious moment I embrace,
 To beg my brethren at this place
 To raise a lusty cheer.

" Macnaughton, joiner, kind of heart,
 Has manfully discharg'd his part,

And lent his long time-honour'd cart
 To bear our cheerful barrels ;
To those who own'd the barrels before,
I'd call for cheers at least a score ;
But who they were—we'll say no more,
 Lest cheers should end in quarrels.
And you, my lads, who muscles strain
 To pull the blazing load,
You're fit to draw Apollo's wain—
 Now, bipeds, take the road.”
Right merrily, right cheerily
 To orders they attend ;
With heart, then, the cartmen
 Paraded through Lochend.

From open windows on the left,
The air with shouts the natives cleft,
And old and young alike seem'd daft
 With seeing such a glare.
Dick Scally, wild at scenes so bright,
Into the barrel with all his might
Must throw his hat—a pate so light,
 Could ill the treasure spare.
Across the “bridge” the chargers prance
 'Mid songs and wilder notes ;
When nimble sprigs would try a dance
 To music from their throats.
While reeling and wheeling,
 Whirl'd lad and canty maid ;

The night flew, the light grew,
And native traits betray'd.

To Dalintober through and back,
The "steeds" and cart made many a tack,
And if their speed got somewhat slack,
The din increas'd its pace.

At Mitchell's door they stood a while,
And raised a cheer was heard a mile;
The "elder" answered with a smile—

His bounty fring'd its grace.

Macalister, the ace of "tars,"

The jocund lads enrich'd;

And Campbell, generous sons of Mars,

With crowns their eyes bewitch'd.

And Marshall, aye partial

To youths of rich and poor,

Rewards them, regards them,

And bless'd them at his door.

At Dalaruan's spacious green,

A welcome sight by all was seen,

For Callum Gow had married Jean,

The toast of all the row.

Macneil the piper piped his best;

And Gow, array'd in spotless vest,

With Jean his bride, and all the rest,

Tripp'd the fantastic toe.

The outer crowd might swell their din,
The dancers heard it not ;
The noisy drones prevail'd within,
And drown'd the other lot.
Till Arty Mac Larty,
For fresh air op'd the door ;
Then hastily and lustily,
He stopp'd the bagpipe's roar.

“ Come oot,” he bawls, “ and see the bleeze ;”
Then out the “ party ” flew like bees,
And left Macneil his bags to squeeze,
And skirl his drowsy tones.
But Dan had blown his breath so long,
He thought it neither rash nor wrong
To store new pith from something strong,
To feed his greedy drones.
Thus with a bottle he made free,
As down his bagpipes fell :
“ I'm noo your only frien', ye see—
They've left you to mysel'.
Then here's luck, my dear duck ;
Aft may we meet thegither.
Deil face them, and chase them,
Wha'd keep us frae each ither.”

By this, the revellers without,
Had got their cue to cheer and shout.

They roar'd : " Dan, piper, please, come out
And treat us to a strain."

Now Donald had upset his chair,
And staggered out to have a stare
At both the folk and tarry glare,
That lighted up the green.

But scarce had gained the outer door
When birkies gripp'd him tight,
And dragg'd him off amid a roar
Of tumult and delight.

M'Crachen and Strachan,
Enskonced him on the cart ;
Then begg'd him and egg'd him,
To give the dance a start.

The bridegroom to the change assented ;
The youngsters shriek'd and jump'd, demented ;
And wagging noddles sagely hinted
They got their man at last.

Dan answer'd with a vacant glow'r
(The index of the bottle's power),
He mutter'd : " Just for ae half hour
I'll do my very best."

A rush was made among the crowd
For partners in the dance :
Ian Bain saluted Moll M'Leod,
MacPhatter " set " to Nance.

M'Kiargan—a rare gun—
Proposed to Sally Miller ;

She slighted and spited
The would-be lady-killer !

Pate Craw engaged Rebecca Leech
By dint of brass and flattering speech ;
His matted head could scarcely reach
His buxom partner's shoulder !
"They're steps and stairs," some cynics cried ;
"A model pair for man and bride ;
Ay, Mirren Greg his suit denied,"
Fair candid rivals told her !
So, much as Mirren loved a "fling"
With man or boy that asked her,
Such sallies from the jeering ring
Now fairly overtasked her.
The crowd then applaud when
They see her from him turning ;
With quick step and back skip
She left the "killer"—*girning!*

Red Colin Shaw, contented chiel,
Who thumped the ground with sole and heel,
For every form of dance and reel
A patent step devised :
'Twas two leaps up, and two thumps down,
One leeward lurch and then wheel round ;
Until his partner Effie found
Folks laughing undisguised.

One shouted "reel" before the time ;
 Then Colin slopes away ;
 While Phemie strikes a pose sublime
 That might adorn a play.
 She press'd him, address'd him :
 " Let 's drop it, Colin Shaw ;
 Be aff man, ye daft man,
 This winna dae at a'."

Without them, on the tumult sped,
 And many a Jock his Jenny led
 To strains that taxed their heel and head—
 For Donald blew with berr.
 His blasts for jigs, strathspeys and reels,
 Blew fire and pepper on their heels ;
 And even Grannie Neilage feels
 Her girlhood's raptures stir.
 With taunting challenge Grannie bow'd
 Before her grandson, Johnnie ;
 " Dont blush," quoth she, "'twas once allow'd
 I was baith jimp and bonnie."
 In cleeking, in shrieking,
 Nor pose nor gamut fail'd her ;
 Though few were, but knew there
 Her son was "ruling Elder."

As wilder Donald fidg'd and blew,
 The brute creation revell'd, too ;—

Hoarse bark'd the deep-mouth'd surly grue

Out o'er the "Factor's Glen";

Black "Toro" with a right good will

Sent back a roar from Calton Hill,

As challenge to the bagpipe shrill—

To Dan and all his men!

Thick "Toby," Grant's auld-farran naig,

That ne'er was known to move a leg,

In *backward* course on road or rig,

Though pull'd by half-a-score,

Retreated from his hay-stuff'd "heck,"

And backward paced and toss'd his neck,

And fain would from his tether break

To join the merry splore,

Till Jamie Shairp, who drove the cob,

O'erheard his charger's snort,

And left the dance and gay hubbub,

To check old Toby's sport.

Bess Gardner, his partner,

Depriv'd of Jamie's pith,

Both stumbled and tumbled,

And press'd the turf beneath.

E'en foxes can't *aye* strain their pace;

And Dan, by skirls now growing less,

Hung out some signals of distress,

From lack of wind, not steam;

The bridal swell, the braw best man,

Foresees collapse of Piper Dan,

And for last reel to Peggy ran
To close the festive dream.
M'Cracken eyes his rival's move,
And feels his choler rise ;
For he himself to Meg made love,
But Meg his presence flies.
Then cannily and bonnily
The swell whirls Peggy Mair ;
Spectators and waiters
Admire the bobbing pair.

With envious stare M'Cracken gazed,
The while the crowd the couple praised,
And more when Peggy's cheek was raised
To catch her partner's smack ;
The wrathful suitor hatch'd his plan,
And darted in on Peggy's " man " ;
Then, straining arm and foot, began
To hold the lassie back.
The curly " swell " fell vengeance swore
Against th' intruder's pate,
Who stung him more than e'er before,
By ducking to his mate !
They gripp'd then, and tripp'd when
M'Cracken hugg'd his leg ;
The " best man," the dress'd man,
In falling, lost his wig !

And now confusion did its worst ;
The crackling blazing barrel burst ;
While every throat the caitiff cursed,
 That spoil'd the merry maze.
M'Cracken, aye on mischief set,
Old Donald's pipes with gully slit ;
Then sagely guessed 'twas time to flit
 By favour of the blaze.
Away he sped for Maitland's Mill,
 And passed Neil Dummie's door,
Nor halted till he gain'd Big Kiln—
 The hero of the hour !
There grandly and blandly
 He told, while cronies roar'd,
How deftly and swiftly
 Dal'ruan loons he floor'd.

Dazed Donald, witless how it came
His drones and chanter—all the same—
Combin'd at once to blight his fame
 And get him dubb'd a sham,
Declared some pow'r of nameless place
In these disasters he could trace,
But hoped to turn his pipes' disgrace
 With just anither dram !
With one gude quaich Auld Nick he'd face
 And all his wiles defy :
But with a gill *that* Prince he'd chase
 And all his train forbye.

Beguil'd then, he smiled then,
And made as though he'd rise,
While fair hopes and rare stoups
In visions rapt his eyes.

But motion from his tar-ry seat
Was now for Dan a hopeless feat ;
Still worse, to thole the scorching heat
Of coal and crackling holly ;
But loosed by aid of friendly hands,
(Though stripp'd of half his tartan pants !)
The piper rear'd, but, tumbling, lands
Upon a vagrant collie.

The brute's wild howls at Grannie's heels
Made horrid duets with her squeals,
Till, panic-struck, the company reels
In terror from the green.

The blaze had spent its final ray ;
The sudden darkness spread dismay,
And men and women fled away
Till scarce a hoof was seen !
Who raised and "paid the piper" wight
Is hid from mortal ken :

The bridal ladies took to flight—
The rest ran home like men !
How Grannie cuff'd the collie's lugs
Let frightful echoes show ;
Who clothed bare Dan with scarfs and rugs
Good angels only know.

As mystery, kind history,
In darkness leave to lie
What Kate said—his mate did—
When Dan's trews caught her eye !

In order next Barasky's wight
With varied themes prolongs the night ;
The stranger at their tenor winced,
And seem'd to wish they ne'er commenced.

THE RED CHAPEL.

ON a day in September when harvest began,
And the sun had descended half-way to the main,
The Rover (the nickname so frequently ran)
Forgather'd by concert with Ossian MacLean.

They met, by appointment, beside the red kirk,
(Now sacred to barking the fishermen's gear),
Where Reverend Boes once honour'd his work
By a life even scoffers were forced to revere.

"Pray, solve me a puzzle," the Rover demands
With a licence betraying a son of the sea ;
"When I voted we'd meet where the red chapel
stands,
Why show'd you aversion at first to agree?"

“ The question disturbs me,” was t’other’s reply ;
“ For a theme is suggested surrounded with awe ;
Yet, though its rehearsal I fain would deny,
The lines of its legend I’ll ruggedly draw :—

“ A reverend shepherd here labour’d for long,
And witness’d the fruit of his mission with joy ;
Impartial, he rated the wealthy and strong,
When sycophants flattering unction would ply.

“ The follies of vagrants in life’s lower walk,
He faithfully censured with equal rebuke ;
With vigorous swoop he pounced like a hawk
On foes of the Standards, the Kirk, or the Book.

“ The serpent that tamper’d with angel and Man,
Regarded the parson with envy and hate ;
Observ’d his success with malice and ban,
And often engaged him in wily debate.

“ One morning in Summer ere sunlight arose,
Of the day when the sacred Communion is held,
The Tempter confronted the eloquent Boes,
And renew’d the advances so often repell’d :

“ ‘ Your neighbours invest you,’ the enemy hiss’d,
‘ With talents and learning allotted to few ;
Your knowledge embraces the present and past,
And ev’n, ’tis rumour’d, the Second Sight, too.

“ ‘ I challenge your science and virtue combined,
To state to your people at chapel to-day,
One scrap of intelligence fresh to their mind
—’Tis much if you’re even as knowing as they.’

“ ‘ Then, list me, Deceiver,’ retorted the saint :—
‘ Dividing the fringe of a horrible cloud,
A bolt from the sky has your mystery rent,
And scorch’d your manœuvre’s enveloping shroud.

“ ‘ Full fair in my vision of heavenly pow’r,
There floats in the aether a chapel I knew ;
Its gables dispart like the trees in a bow’r ;
Its pillars are timber and open to view.

“ ‘ I see in the lobbies with saws in their hands,
Misguided mechanics on mischief debate ;
I see them now sawing, at Satan’s commands,
The pillars supporting the gallery’s weight.

“ ‘ The deed is completed ; now slink they away,
With mental reproaches impress’d on their brow ;
They labour’d that many should perish this day—
You sneer’d at my second sight—Question it now !

“ ‘ Still further to fret you and add to your shame,
To frustrate your purpose and crown your defeat ;
Your minions shall henceforth your service disclaim,
And their saws and their chisels to pruning hooks beat.

“ ‘ Aroused by my voice from yon pulpit again,
And reviewing with horror the ruin design’d,
Repentant, believing, they’ll mercy obtain,
And rival in graces the best of mankind.

“ ‘ As pillars in Zion they’ll firmly support
The faith and the morals of those you would slay ;
Their skill on your fabric they’ll deftly retort,
And gather recruits for the glorious fray.

“ ‘ Yet, stay ! (I may err—I trust it is so)
Some gloomy forebodings my spirit disturb ;
One wretch from a schemer to wrecker will grow,
—In folly a mule that no bridle can curb.

“ ‘ See yonder a multitude flocking in haste,
As doves to the windows to bask in the sun ;
You’ve lost them for ever ; no sophistry waste—
Nefarious strategist, baffled, begone ! ’ ”

The tale is concluded as slowly they pace
Through alleys and windings that led to the shore,
Where idly they purposed the minutes to chase,
By reviewing the pages of Memory’s store.

A yawl (’twas a neighbour’s) lay snug on the strand,
Supplied with equipment to sail or to row ;
So, changing their purpose they launch from the land,
To the summons of breezes that wooingly blow.

What lamp in the sky, what planet or star,
O'er a haven more lovely its radiance throws,
'Than the Loch that is guarded by Island Davaar,
And mirrors Bengullion's majestic repose?

Encircled by ranges of varying charms,
It knows not the havoc of tempest or squall ;
When ocean outside it is ravaged with storms,
It has room for a navy and calm for a yawl.

In decades gone by when summer was new,
And Kilbrannon rewarded the fisherman's toil,
What argosies furrow'd the haven's deep blue,
Ere they anchor'd at morning to tally their spoil !

Where better can swimmers their languor recruit,
In pools for the timid or depths for the bold ?
In its brine there is magic and healing to boot—
It ripens the youthful, makes younger the old.

How clear o'er its waters in softening sounds,
When sunlight is fading and Nature is still,
Comes the lowing of oxen, the barking of hound ;
Or the bleating of lambs on the crag or the hill.

Proud Venice exults in her gondolas' crews,
As her gulf they make vocal with music and song ;
But dull are her echoes contrasted with yours,
As o'er thee, fair haven, they're wafted along.

No circle of mountains Venezia girds,
To gather and render the complicate strain ;
But here the full swell of melodious chords
Rebounds from their summits and mingles again.

(If aught of a passion for chorus and glee
Has lighten'd the toil of my riper career,
I owe it to rudiments practised on thee,
Untutored in gamut but eager to hear.

Ah ! doubtless the spell of harmonious song
Was partly derived from my cronies of yore ;
Thus sweeter if sadder the themes that prolong
The memory of songsters now vocal no more.)

The " salt " at the stern and his mate at the bow,
The shallop responds to the lure of the breeze ;
Bright Phoebus with gold tipp'd valley and knowe,
And gifted the landscape with power to please.

O'er the tiniest wavelets the vessel and crew
'Mid way from the beaches exultingly ride ;
A fair panorama enhances their view,
Suggestive of musings on every side.

On the right is receding in silence and gloom
Kilkerran's churchyard, where sweetly repose
Rare worthies whose virtues no grave can entomb ;
For worth and its triumphs extinction refuse.

Still further and eastward Bengullion displays
The fancies of Nature o'er hillock and dells ;
From its foot to the summits in th' evening rays
The bloom of the heather the purple excels.

From the northern border rise Askomil braes,
Responsive with smiles to Bengullion's salute ;
The clamour of either the other repays,
And signals their neighbours to echo the shout.

The mound of the Trench (once mounted with guns)
Now slips to the rear with quickening glide ;
And leeward the slope of Glenramskill runs
From the shallop now urged by the wind and the tide.

Thus wafted the voyagers speedily gain
The western margin of lonely Davaar ;
An inlet was enter'd—well-known to the twain—
And the vessel was moor'd with the skill of the "tar."

Ere daylight should vanish from hollow and peak,
And the gloaming the smiling perspective obscure,
A spot on the slope the excursionists seek,
Whence a prospect may converse and pleasure ensure.

Arrived at a plateau both sunny and dry
The couple repose them to muse on the scene.
"Now, Ossian," quoth t'other, "while here we may lie,
Pursue you the sketch interrupted yestreen."

“Then see,” said the chronicler, “yonder to right
Outstretches the upland I traversed when young ;
Had the Muses but chosen their haunt on its height
Its praises o’er Europe my verses had rung.

“There pluck’d I the berries of bramble and heath,
Unheeded, unchallenged, by tenant or laird ;
Of joys that have flattered my palate and teeth
Beshrew me if aught with their savour compared.

“From the crown of Knockscalbert (where circles a
mound
Mayhap by the Druids regarded with awe)
Huge stones I released whose bumping and bound
A Newton might welcome as proof of his “law.”

“As lithe as a rabbit that jerks on the plain
I scamper’d o’er hollows and ridges of broom ;
Enchanted at times by the moor-linnet’s strain,
Or list’ning the busy bees’ querulous hum.

“Bright glisten’d the braes in the splendour of morn,
And reflected the smile of the sun at his height ;
With radiance they glow’d when the Whinnyhill
horn
Resounded the cow-herds’ retreat for the night.

“I see in the distance the site of the school
Where knowledge first open’d her scroll to my gaze ;

My teachers were various—so was their rule :
Some plied me with lessons, some lured me to plays.

“ ’Tis hard to apportion the measure of praise
That is due to the zeal of a tutor or mate ;
Yet the branches, ’tis known, for which nobody
pays
Are master’d—while others are left to their fate.

“ Still memory peoples with ardour and life
The benches and tables arranged in the room ;
Here genius is busy with dexterous knife
At carving mementoes for ages to come.

“ And yonder’s a maiden who skips to the floor
To whisper the master to sharpen her quill.
The moment is precious : of callants a score
Discover *their* pens need mending as well.

“ The obliging preceptor’s enclosed by a crowd,
Though none are in haste his attention to court ;
With signals and postures (no talking allow’d)
The suitors indulge in their ogling sport.

“ If sterner emotions their bosoms possess’d
And jealousy prompted the envious sigh,
The show of aggression *her* presence repress’d
—The rivals were modest while Polly was nigh.

“Ye teachers, how vainly the credit ye claim
For the progress in learning your pupils attain !
Compared with a damsel’s your efforts are tame
In urging a student’s competitive strain.

“While fondly ye fancy your lectures and taws
Ensure application to lessons and rules,
The hope of some fair one’s regard and applause
Is mightier than legions of tutors and schools.

“I own it with pride—I’ve own’d it to Jane,
Who once was my schoolmate, and may be my bride—
The triumph o’er rivals in classes to gain
Her smile and approval the motive supplied.

“And yonder’s a steading whence once, it is told,
A grabber ungratefully pilfer’d a bird ;
At Candlemas cock-fight one promised him gold
If the bird in the contest should equal the third.

“A couple of gallants is flung on the floor
In presence of teacher, of pupil and friend ;
No combatants ever more gracefully bore
The weapons to strike or the life to defend.

“With their heads and their necks outstretched at
 full length,
And their body compress’d and swamp as an eel,
The feathery duellists tested their strength
And batter’d each other with pinion and steel.

“ Ballygreggan’s old champion settled his foe
And added new lustre to previous fame ;
Then strutted about as if wishing to know
If another is ready to honour the game.

“ The grabber, responsive, next open’d his bag
To offer for battle his ponderous bird ;
At the sight of his stature a simpering wag
Exclaim’d that with steel he was needlessly spurr’d.

“ The fowl is let down in the ‘ champion’s ’ view ;
But yielding to terror or withering scorn,
Through the open half door he gallantly flew
And crow’d at a chicken unearthing a corn !

“ And well I remember the generous chum
Who brighten’d my spirit when sinking in gloom ;
Who polish’d my Essay, corrected my sum,
And pummel’d the bully that follow’d me home.

“ Such tempers as his an influence wield
More lasting and potent than precept or pelf ;
As great as the hero that bleeds on the field
Is the school boy that aids you to rival himself.

“ Thus pleasantly glided my boyhood away,
And tinted the future with roseate hue ;
Thrice happy was I that no wandering ray
Reveal’d the distresses our family knew.

“ May my hope be well founded that sunshine and joy
Illumined the path of my parents when young ;
That the dreams that enchanted the girl and the boy,
Their spell o'er their chequered experience flung !

“ In the farm where my ancestors burrow'd and toil'd,
In the hope of the comforts it never supplied,
The sirens of fancy my childhood beguiled,
While hardship and sorrow were rife at my side.

“ The greed of a landlord our capital drain'd
With rents and exactions supremely severe ;
Till, threaten'd with ruin, my father complain'd,
And pray'd for reduction—at least for a year.

“ The lambs in the spring had succumb'd to the snow ;
The grass and the grain in the summer decay'd ;
The prices of stock, like its feeding, were low,
And meagre the yield of the plough and the spade.

“ The strictest economy meted our meals,
And home-made habiliments saved us expense ;
Day over, we twisted green withes into creels
Till weariness conquer'd each vigilant sense.

“ A record so grim on the Factor we press'd,
Indulging the hope he would honour our plea ;
As well might the dove intercede for her nest
With the fox in his den or the hawk on a tree.

“ Our appeal for redress was return'd us with scorn,
And insult with injury soil'd the reply ;
' Remove,' quoth the Agent (an alien born),
' Your rent is too low—your ambition too high.'

“ The grip of a statute too partial to lairds
Restricted proceedings to further our cause :—
The Rights of Humanity greed disregards,
But chuckles o'er rapine that's sanction'd by laws.

“ Our property sold at the edict of sharks,
Who clutch in a scrimmage what honesty earns ;
The family, penniless, quitted their parks,
Their garden and produce, their hedges and burns.

“ And yet for the country, its Freedom, and King,
My kinsmen and relatives fell on the plain—
And this is the guerdon their victories bring,
While avarice garners the spoils of the slain !

“ If, loyal, we answer our country's demand,
And rally to arms at the trumpeter's call,
Should our magnates begrudge us the boon of our
land

When our valour secures them possession at all ?

“ Injustice, short-sighted, may banish the brave
And clear the fair hills for the deer and the sheep ;

Yet wealth nor itself nor possessor can save
When the fiend of reprisal shall start from his sleep.

“Sad prospect ! if over each valley and glen
Gregarious quadrupeds only shall roam ;
If there are forbidden the dwellings of men
Where work and intelligence long had a home !

“And where shall our populous cities and towns
Their pith and degenerate vigour recruit,
When the country no longer the nurseries owns
Where its physical stamina first had its root ?

“But the sun has gone down 'neath the verge of the
main,
And, seeing you surly, I'll finish my tale.”
“Enough,” quoth the Rover, “give over, Maclean ;
To the strand let us hasten and hoist up the sail.”

With forces unequal they made for the bay—
The Rover impatient and first in the race ;
Arrived at the shallop he push'd her away
While quizzing his fellow to quicken his pace.

Suspecting his purpose, the chronicler dash'd
Into water so deep it behoved him to swim ;
From the vessel the water the miscreant splash'd
And threaten'd the swimmer, who clung to its rim.

“Let go!” said the caitiff; “now loosen your hold;
Refusal may cost you a ducking—or more.
Do you think I’ve connived at the legends you told,
Or failed to divine the construction they bore.

“Too thinly the sinister drift you disguise
Of the sermon you preached on the farm and the kirk;
Obtuse were my brain did I fail to surmise
The sly inuendoes that under it lurk.

“My early adventures at cock-fights and kirks
Reflection might lead even you to forget;
While covert allusions to ‘factors and sharks’
Leave nothing or little my vengeance to whet.

“That little’s supplied by the maiden you loved,
Whom you hoped for your bride—but your scheme is
 undone;
Your wooing, like Rover’s, abortive has proved—
‘Nefarious strategist, baffled, begone.’”

So saying, he push’d his companion away,
And left him to sink or to swim as he might;
Then seizing the rudder, he steered for “the bay,”
But long ere the morning betook him to flight.

KILLOCRAW.

IN Kilocraw the night drave on
 'Mid jests and songs and tales ;
The motley group reck'd not the blasts
 Nor wrath of rising gales.

Beneath the hall's o'erarching roof
 The ample peat fire blazed,
And many an eye in dreamy mood
 Upon its embers gazed.

The ebon "bing," * of dateless age,
 Reclaim'd from boggy moor,
Engaged the long-time-honour'd space
 'Twixt grate and parlour door.

Upon its hard, unpolish'd plane
 (Fatigue such fault ignores)
The farmer's sons reclined their frames
 —The "herd" behind them snores.

The servant "lads" lounge in their chairs,
 And leisure's rapture feel ;
The maids have milk'd the patient cows,
 And ply their spinning wheel.

* Bench.

Some space aback a beggar loon,
Well flank'd with bulky haps,
A licensed kern, alternates jests
With short and easy naps.

For days the pawky carle enjoy'd
This hospitable howff ;
And of his "yarns" the inmates thought
They ne'er could have enough.

Full many a dark and startling tale,
Of scenes beheld abroad,
Ran fluent from his oily tongue,
Confirm'd by look and nod.

Of hair-breadth 'scapes he had his share,
On land and boisterous main ;
He quoted fights he might have fought,
And champions he had slain.

Beside him sat old Heckler Ned—
Of hecklers first was he ;
Ned dressed the lint of every farm
From Moil to Ballochantee.

The heckler's prongs, robust and sharp
As the Dragons' teeth of old,
Had ceas'd the twang that many an hour
His pithful labour told.

And next in order sat and smiled
The pedlar with his pack,
Alike expert in trogging wares,
And passing round the crack.

The secrets of each sighing swain
From Oban to Southend,
Were deftly caught and often doled,
To serve a trader's end.

The tinsell'd jewels in his box
The maids were fain to buy,
In hopes this confidant would moot
What swains for them might sigh.

With artful wile the loon divined
The lasses' facile mood :
In trade he deem'd it scarce a sin
Their fancies to delude.

If trinkets dear at any price
Secured a flattering sale,
Rare gossip, free from extra charge,
He threw into the scale.

New stores of clavers in return
Would every maid confide ;
The absence of romantic notes
The chapman's wit supplied.

Such was the various group that met
That night at Killocrow,
Prepared to list a tale, or tell
What once they heard or saw ;

With less restraint, as th' old goodman
From home had gone that day ;
And few there knew, and no one ask'd,
How long in town he'd stay.

Thus 'mid the freedom from reserve
The absent host ensured,
Each, in his way, the varied "yarn"
In quick succession pour'd.

The hazel rafters rang again
With laughter and applause,
As packman Will the group regaled
With jests and witty saws.

The shepherd's dog, with one eye closed,
The eyelid veil'd the other,
Was startled from his soft repose,
And, barking, swell'd the pother.

At times the "herd" o'ershot the mark
With shouts inopportune,
And sallied out in noisy mirth
When wit there might be none.

To silence collie and his chum
The household soon agreed ;
And sharp rebukes and hearty cuffs
Were dealt in word and deed.

The pedlar moved (of right possessed,
As he had done his part),
“The heckler from his wallet’s store
Some legend should impart.”

And, interruption to forestall,
The needed hint he gave ;
The tale the minstrel might relate
Were best if true and grave.

The household wide with one consent
This sage advice applaud,
And beg the chosen scene might lie
At home and not abroad.

And Rumour, with her thousand tongues,
Reported through the glen,
That in his breast the heckler held
What few alive might ken.

Oft was he press’d in other days
To tell what part he bore
In the bustle of the tragic wreck
On Tangytavil shore.

“I’ve heard it said,” quoth the farmer’s son,
—The elder of the two—

“That none so well the scene can tell
In terms so full and true.

“But father hates the theme, I know,
And won’t allusion bear;
Though surely in its doubtful phase
He could not have a share.

“But lately, on a boisterous day,
With him I slowly paced
The broken beach of Port-na-marv,
With wreckage then defaced.

“Old Hector—he who mends the roads,
And dwells at Killarow—
Accosted us beside the rock
Where cairds the gauger slew.

“There, pressing near my father’s side,
As if with secret lore,
He whispered in his heedless ear
Some deed in days of yore.

“‘Twas on that ledge the vessel struck
On yon tempestuous night;
And there’s the spot whereon (’tis said)
Appeared the fatal light.’

“ Still further was old Hector bent
The subject to pursue,
In hopes my father’s thanks to earn
—And more than thanks, I trow.

“ ‘ Ne’er broach to me this theme again,’
With wrath my father spoke :
‘ From voice high-pitch’d or whispers low
The subject I’ll not brook.’

“ A thousand pardons Hector begged,
And vow’d he’d err no more ;
Yet said he wondered father felt
So keenly on that score.

“ ‘ For,’ quoth the hoary mountaineer,
‘ Bove every name that’s bound
With the record of that luckless night
Your name is nobly found.’

“ ‘ Thanks, Hector, for your friendly words
—I know they are sincere ;
Yet, ’twixt what wakes my pride and pain
You’ll find it hard to steer.

“ ‘ I offered aid that woful morn
—I own’t with modest pride—
Yet ’neath a bushel long I strove
My humble light to hide.

“ For no unhallow'd part have I
To blush or to atone—
But, intermission to cut short,
“ Let sleeping dogs alone.” ’

“ Such were the words that reach'd my ears
Beside the noted bay,
With other hints design'd, methought,
Remonstrance to convey.

“ The ardour of my father's breast
Undid his sage design
T' enclose the secret in his heart,
And keep it far from mine.

“ Nor do I think I strain a point
When hence I thus conclude,
That mention of the theme at all
Is adverse to his mood.

“ If solemn silence was imposed
On Hector's facile tongue,
Methinks he'd challenge all who would
The hated theme prolong.

“ A filial part—not more, you'll own—
I duly now perform,
And beg the seneschal would shun
What themes might stir a storm.”

Thus earnestly the elder son
Recorded his protest
Against all reference to the scene,
And hoped it there might rest.

“Far be’t from me,” the heckler vow’d,
“Your filial awe to sap ;
Or idly spread insidious snares
Your virtue to entrap.

“’Tis known my kinsman’s earnest wish
Is sacred with his kin ;
And well the outward act reflects
The love they bear within.

“But a wish is oft the hasty growth
Of dim, ill-shaken thought,
Whose stem would wither in its prime
If light were on it brought.

“When feeling, be it e’er so pure,
Opposes honour’s voice,
The manly jury doubts not long
On which to fix its choice.”

But curiosity thus roused
Within the eager crowd,
Now gathered force and found a vent
In voices deep and loud.

“I’ve something heard,” quoth Angus Blue,
—An usher from Drumore—
About the awful midnight wreck
On Tangytavil shore.

“But various have the stories been
—No two are quite the same—
This moment one gets boundless praise,
The next, he’s steeped in blame.

“The honour paid your father’s wish,
My worthy kinsman’s son,
Though sprung from sense of duty’s call,
True kindness may outrun.

“Well guess I if your father knew
That envy’s tongue’s at work,
To mix him with a ruthless crew
That plied the club and dirk,

“Instead of fearing moorland tongues
Should drag the truth to-day,
He’d have it roar’d in echoes loud
From Macrihanish bay.

“Old Hector’s speech, and eke your sire’s
(’Twas so, methinks, you spoke),
Your father’s innocence delared
Beside Vik Caggen’s rock.

“Then for *his* sake, and family’s sake,
To whom by love I’m bound,
I vote the heckler start his tale,
An ’t please the household round.”

Though mark’d assent from all save one
Sustain’d the usher’s vote,
The heckler weigh’d the two extremes—
To tell the tale or not.

Meanwhile the mistress of the “hall”
Made many a casual trip
Between the byre and parlour door,
With soft, though stately, step.

A distant dignity at first
Enrobed tall madam’s air ;
Anon she lingered near the group,
And fain would settle there.

A question now and then she put,
But answer seldom won ;
For more engrossing were the hints
Of Edward and her son.

From Tobermory’s tortuous shore
She sail’d in youthful pride,
And entered clifty Killocrow
A handsome, winsome bride.

Macvoolin's sense and graceful form
Had won her heart and hand ;
And many a suitor mourn'd the day
She left her native land.

No whisper e'er convey'd to her,
In youth or later day,
The dimmest outline of the wreck
That blurred the neighbouring bay.

Much less had "tales" her husband's name
With any fama mix'd ;
She prized him still, as on that day
Her married lot she fix'd.

Disjointed fragments even then
Were all that reach'd her ear ;
For quick though she returned, she would
As quickly disappear.

One startling phrase had hook'd her thought,
'Twas uttered by her son :—
"But, intermission to cut short,
Let sleeping dogs alone."

Attracted by the pregnant hint
The latter line convey'd,
With spacious show of an excuse
She stood and longer stay'd.

“I hope,” quoth she, “that feeble man,
“The beggar near the sill,
Is comfortable in his lair,
And feels nor pain nor chill.

“Methinks, but probably I err’d,
Just now he op’d his eyes,
And quickly cast the hurried glance
That seeming peace belies.

A paleness seem’d to mark his face,
Unseen before to-night;
Though happily my vision fail’d
To catch his hue aright.”

Thus spake the dame, but all agreed
She sought excuse to stay,
And hear what more her thoughtful son
And Edward had to say.

The latter’s counsel won her vote
As, frankly she confess’d,
Ev’n other motives urged her wish
That touch’d no other breast.

The narrative would soon dissolve
The doubt that vex’d her mind,
If foul’s that heart and stain’d that hand
She chose ’bove all mankind.

But, doubtless, more assuring thoughts
In turn advanced their plea ;
For loving wives their husbands view
As mortals angels see.

Then Voolin's spouse, of "pros and cons"
Decides the scope and sum :
"I beg the heckler to relate
' Fair Mary of the Drum.'"

"Me lists it much," quoth Ned, "to say
Your pleasure guides my will ;
The theme that suits you I'll attempt
With all my feeble skill.

And yet the stories are allied,
And form a perfect whole ;
As counterparts they co-exist,
As body with the soul."

DELUSIVE VISIONS.

TOM left his father's cheerful home
Ere twenty years were o'er,
With prospects sparkling as the waves
That laved his native shore.

Yet toned with sadness are the views
That swim before his gaze ;
And the faltering tongue, in spite of smiles,
His bosom's throes betrays.

A father's and a mother's love
The parting blessing breathes ;
And many a hoary friend around
The sigh of pray'r bequeaths.

Brothers and sisters—four in all—
Escort him, first, a mile ;
But then they thought the distance short,
And never *felt* the toil.

New themes came rushing to their lips,
Or old remembrance woke ;
And so they'd walk another mile
While all, *together*, spoke.

The second mile-stone, too, they pass'd,
But none *let on* he saw,
Yet at the third their brother said :
“The limit *here* we'll draw.”

Then sister Jane—the family pet—
The youngest of the core,
Declared three miles were but a *bit*,
And she could travel four.

“But, Jane, remember you will have
To trudge the journey back ;
And for the double course your limbs
The needed vigour lack.”

“No, brother, no ; I'm strong enough,
And stronger hope to be ;
And farther on, we'll meet you, Tom,
When you return from sea.”

“Now, where, my pet, should be the spot
To meet your roving Tom ?”

“Oh ! further on, and nearer town,
We'll bid you welcome home.”

“And let me see,” quoth thoughtful Jane
“Let's meet you at the stone
Beside the churchyard's ivy wall
That shield's the cowherd's loan.”

“Wilt keep thy word, my bonnie bird,
Should Heav'n thy days prolong?”
“I will,” said Jane; “we will,” said all.
With loud and gleesome tongue.

They kiss'd and parted. Slow indeed
Their parting was and sore.
Oft turning back, they made one mile
Much longer than the four.

Some years elapsed ere once again
Tom paced his native land;
But all that time, though oft he wrote,
No letter reach'd his hand.

But still he hoped his latest note
The “escort” would prepare,
To meet him at the trysting spot
And give him welcome there.

A winding path he slowly cleared,
When rose the stone to view,
Whereat his fancy placed the group
That would old joys renew.

Exulting hope anon subsides,
And bosom-pangs succeed,
As, in response to playful calls,
No eager ear gives heed.

Then homeward sped the pensive youth,
To learn the worst and best ;
While startling doubts, ne'er felt before,
Perplex'd his anxious breast.

Attracted by a funeral train,
He halts upon his way,
And beckoning to an idle swain,
Would fain his fears allay.

“ Now, boy,” quoth he, with faltering tongue,
“ Pray tell me (if you know)
Whose last remains are being convey'd
Through yonder arch below ?”

“ They're Janey Wilson's of the ' Barns,'
And she's the last of three ;
The family all lie buried there,
Except young Tom at sea.”

A braver heart than Tom's ne'er beat
Within the human form ;
No bolder face stern danger met
On ocean's frantic storm.

Far out at sea in midnight's gloom,
When winds swept moaning by,
Their wailing tones suggested home,
And Jane's long doleful sigh.

Unbidden springs of latent grief
At times would flood his breast ;
But even then his manly soul
The rising tear repress'd.

Yet as the caverns in the hills
That fringed his father's farm,
For long contain within their bars
The stores of winter's storm ;

Until some soft and tender chink
The rising pressure strains,
And years' accumulated floods
Roll o'er the subject plains.

So Tom's firm bosom, smitten sore,
Its long-pent dew unseals ;
And the rugged, hardy, tawny "tar,"
A feminine heart reveals.

Beside the stone where, many a month,
On sea or foreign shore,
His fancy conjured joys that now
Were quench'd for evermore,

He sated Nature's crave for tears
—The sweet discharge of grief—
Then sought the churchyard, where he should
Of mourners be the chief.

The sorrow of th' attendant crowd
Gave way to strange surprise,
As all, acquaintances and friends,
The sailor recognise.

A deeper silence than before
Among the mourners reign'd,
As ere the bier was lowered down,
Its head the seaman gain'd.

Two cords he clutched with eager grasp,
As signs of double woe,
And maugre grave decorum's wont,
Breath'd out, in accents low :—

“ Angelic Jane, Heav'n wills it thus,
You meet your loving Tom ;
When next we meet, in heaven be 't—
There give him welcome home.”

The touching scene wrung ample floods
From each spectator's eyes ;
More for the living than the dead
Were heav'd the long-drawn sighs.

The solemn ceremony closed,
And friends began to part,
When kinsmen round the sailor press,
And idle questions start.

“ Oh ! spare my tongue details like these,”
His looks appear'd to say ;
My bosom sinks with sorrow's weight,
And seems to melt away.

“ Farewell, dear cousin, I must hence,”
He uttered with a sob :
“ A longer stay, of all its strength
My mind, I fear, would rob.

“ Oh ! had I this distress foreseen,
How gladly had I stay'd,
In foreign parts to brood o'er hopes
In careless ruin laid.

“ Farewell for e'er ! my boyhood's home,
Now wasted, bare, and bleak ;
Upon your soil my wounded soul
No tranquil rest may seek.

“ Farewell, ye walls, that now enclose
Within this hallow'd ground,
The dear remains of those in whom
Earth's chief delight I've found.

“ Farewell, my gentle, sainted Jane !
Adieu ! my brothers dear !
Rest ! faithful parents ; on my breast
Your names till death I'll bear.”

“Why antedate” (his cousin asked)

“Your parents’ final rest?

Has false report your credent ear

With groundless fear distress’d?”

“Then, is’t not so their aged forms

Repose beneath the sod?

And have I fail’d to catch the sense

Of answers from a lad—

“A neat herd boy—who thus replied

To questions urged by me:—

‘The family all lie buried there

Except young Tom at sea’?

“But part is true: your parents live—

Have still their course to run;

Still o’er their days’ horizon verge

Heav’n hangs their downward sun.

“Your father’s absence, mourned by all

In village, cot, and farm,

Is due to illness, sharp, mayhap,

But causing no alarm.

“Your mother and your aged sire

Will welcome your return;

’Twill ease the pressure of their grief

For those they’re called to mourn.

A gleam of unexpected joy
Tom's bosom lit anew,
More welcome as a sullen gloom
So lately veil'd his view.

With filial ardour now revived
His home he seeks again,
While every footstep brings to view
Scenes treasured in his brain.

There stretch'd the Laggan to the left,
For cereal wealth renowned ;
No richer soil his eyes engaged
In earth's wide travels round.

Still farther on smiles Lossit bay,
Now wrapt in soft repose ;
And frowning o'er the placid main
Its rocky ramparts rose.

Before him Islay's lovely form
A fresh regard invites ;
From every feature of the isle
He gathers new delights.

The ocean, almost smooth as glass,
In slumbering grandeur lay ;
And brightly stream'd the sloping beams
Of the golden orb of day.

(Ye who have travers'd foreign realms
And o'er their splendours doat ;
Who 've witnessed old historic bays,
And will their wonders quote,

Might feel your raptures still increase
On Macrihanish shore,
What time it rests in tranquil peace,
Or tempests wake its roar.)

A golden radiance Jura's peaks
Now bathed in mellow hues ;
A fitter home the fabled gods
Nowhere on earth could choose.

In broken bluffs and deep-scoop'd glens,
In scaur and rock-strewn shore,
The fitful freaks of Nature's force
Suggestive traces bore.

Here sandy downs like castles fair—
Trophies of wind and wave—
High o'er the landscape's spacious plain
Their brent-clad summits heave.

Yet not these views—though fair they seem—
The sailor most impress'd :
The simpler features of the farm
A stronger spell possess'd.

There flows and purls the limpid stream
Beside and 'neath the road,
Whose fancied echoes sooth'd his dream
When foreign realms he trod.

No fruit produced in tropic climes
On tree, or shrub, or ground,
Vied with the cresses that in beds
The streamlet's margin bound.

The barn and barnyard—there they stand !
What sunny days again
They call from memory's faithful store,
Albeit now dash'd with pain !

Within the yard there gently swung,
In attitude forlorn,
With branches waving welcome home,
The gnarl'd and rugged thorn.

Beneath its boughs in other days
The hours like minutes sped,
When merry swings the youngsters charm'd,
And he the pastime led.

No laughter now disturbs the air,
Nor hills the din repeat ;
No eager sister quits the yard
To tell some swinging feat !

Oppressive silence reigns supreme
In steading, yard, and knowes,
Save when the wind with moaning wail
Sigh'd through the bending boughs.

And much it moved him that the dogs,
And one a favourite too,
Bark'd hoarsely at his pensive steps,
Until he backward drew.

At length a cordial fond embrace
Express'd his parents' joy ;
And for a time their grief was lost
In raptures o'er their boy.

In slow details the family blanks,
Each, sadly, would explain ;
And though the tale fresh sorrow stirr'd,
They yearn'd to tell 't again.

They told that oft when fever's rage
Thrust reason from her seat,
The bairns would rave the time was near
Their brother Tom to meet.

And when decay's dark ominous clouds
O'er Janey's vision spread,
She wish'd that Tom some favourite flow'r
Should place above her head.

Responsive to the tender charge
His dying sister gave,
Next morn a fitting wreath he bore,
And hied him to her grave.

The immortelles upon the turf
He laid with pious hands,
And bathed them with the ready tear
The wounded breast commands.

Then slowly passing from the ground
That held remains so dear,
He saw a damsel young and fair
Within the arch appear.

As one arrested in the path
Of some unworthy call,
She cast a furtive glance at Tom,
And slunk outside the wall.

Perplexing thoughts his spirit moved,
As home his steps he turned ;
Musing, he wondered if the maid
His presence feared or scorned.

“Or may it be,” he inly ask’d,
“This damsel, too, has cause,
Like me, to mourn departed friends,
And by their tombs to pause.

“ And have I, guiltless of intent,
Disturb'd her hallow'd grief,
And scared her from the lonely haunt
Where sorrow seeks relief.”

A week elaps'd, and ere his home
He left again for sea,
His kindred's final resting-place
Once more he long'd to see.

One evening, as the radiant sun
Hung o'er the western wave,
A tender impulse urged his steps
Towards his sister's grave.

With deep surprise and strange delight
He sees, bent o'er her tomb,
The maid that late his presence shirk'd
And, blushing, hurried home.

A tiny wreath she just had placed
Upon the dappled sward,
Whose every inch the maiden seem'd
To scan with sad regard.

When, startled by a stranger's form,
A blush suffused her face,
And eagerly yet modestly
She would her steps retrace.

A mutual glance at once reveal'd
Their sympathetic hearts ;
An influence quick and soft as light
Swift through their bosoms darts.

In modest guise the sailor asks
What interest in that lair
The maid might have ; and why thus, twice,
He chanced to meet her there ?

“ Good stranger ”—thus the maid replied—
“ Though stranger *now* you 're none,”
The secret you request is hid
From all beneath the sun ;

“ And were I not aware the cause
Alike concerns us both,
Even to *you* to state its gist,
My heart would still be loath.”

“ Oh ! tarry, maid,”—the lad rejoin'd—
“ Your words provoke my zeal
To hear you cite your mournful tale
And all its train reveal.

“ My darling Jane—in glory now—
Your heart like mine possess'd :
It stills my grief to learn her grace
The hearts of *all* impress'd.”

“ Ah ! true, kind sir, the sainted child
—To earth but briefly lent—
My soul with hooks of iron bound
—Her death my bosom rent.

“ But deeper feelings, I must own,
(Th’ avowal you’ll forgive)
Engaged me to one dearer still
—For whom ’twas life to live.

“ Your brother (twin to you, they say)
My partial fondness won ;
But since his death all zest for life
From me is almost gone.

“ The bond, howe’er, that knit us both,
Your parents disapprov’d ;
And yet the more our love was cross’d,
The more we fondly loved.

“ One day we scour’d the craggy hill
’Twixt Craigs and Kilmahoe,
And there, in vows, we pledg’d our troth
Till death—for weal or woe.

“ In token of a lover’s joy,
A wild rose blooming fair
Beneath a ledge he strove to pluck,
To give it me to wear.

“ The envious foothold straight gave way,
And down my partner slid,
Till rolling farther down the brow
He struck a flinty bed.

“ Since that disaster, health robust
Your brother ne'er enjoy'd,
Though noted surgeons counsel gave,
And practised skill employ'd.

“ Yet more than half the pain that writhed
His spirit and his frame,
Was due to silence on the cause
He felt he durst not name.

“ Both friends and parents—much deceived—
To other causes traced
The slow decay that seem'd so soon
His manly strength to waste.

“ But o'er the graver scenes that closed
My William's brief career,
Remembrance bids me draw the veil
And seal its record here.”

With anguish press'd and downcast look
Tom sobb'd and sigh'd again ;
More would he know, but closing day
Must further news restrain.

Forewarn'd by eve's now gathering gloom
The hallow'd bounds they quit ;
A "distance" still their guise defined,
While love their feelings knit.

Much-meaning looks they oft exchanged,
And language breath'd in sighs,
And palm in palm the pledge avow'd
Their words would fain disguise.

Next day, upon the spritty knowes
That flank the sandy bay,
They both agreed to meet and list
What either long'd to say.

To sleep indeed, but not to rest,
That night Tom laid him down ;
Not even ocean's roaring surge
Could Mary's echoes drown.

To these were join'd the maiden's tale
With artless grace adorn'd ;
And not less touching were her thoughts
Of him she sorely mourn'd.

Alternate and conflicting doubts
His troubled spirit sway'd,
As new conditions and their force
In restless scales he weigh'd :

“ My time at home draws to an end
—I shortly must away—
Too brief’s the space to prove a love
Grown perfect in a day.

“ And can I to fraternal love
A lover’s passion join ;
And for a stranger maiden’s heart
Deep grief so soon resign !”

The level ray of rising dawn
O’ertook Tom’s waking dream ;
He rose, and pass’d the morning hours
Along his favourite stream.

The flowers that deck’d its winding banks
Fair Mary’s charms recall ;
Upon his ear each warbler’s tones
Like Mary’s accents fall.

The morning’s sweet and radiant beams,
That solace eye and mind,
No fairer seem’d than Mary’s face,
Where smiles with blushes join’d.

Anon when Phoebus gain’d the height
Of heav’n’s ascending span,
He sees his bosom’s idol near,
With visage sad and wan.

Their greeting over, Tom besought
His "love" the cause to tell
Why, since they parted full of joy,
Her hopeful count'nance fell.

"'Tis not," she answered with a sigh,
While tears her cheek bedew,
"That I agreed to meet you here
And make my promise true.

"You may have heard, when first I traced
My blighted course of love,
Your parents plied all cautious schemes
To make it fruitless prove.

"They grieved to think that I, some day,
Might be thy brother's bride ;
And shall I pour another drop
Into their sorrow's tide ?

"Heav'n thus our union may have barr'd
To thwart our perverse wills ;
Behoves it now the partner spared
To challenge greater ills ?"

"Your fears, my darling, now dismiss,"
Her anxious mate replied ;
"Fain would my parents now concede
The favour they denied.

“ Yestreen, with both, I broach'd the theme
 In wary distant phrase :
And, for aversion to your name,
 They join'd me in your praise.

“ And as for Heaven's high designs—
 Too high for mortal view—
The trial sent fair Reason's voice
 Would hardly trace to *you*.

“ Your deep devotion (known too late)
 Bestow'd on sister Jane,
My parents' thanks evokes ; in you
 They see their child again.

“ More settled peace would soothe their days
 While lingering life extends,
Were't in their power, for wounding slights,
 To make you full amends.

“ And for the love they bear to me,
 And bore for those they mourn,
Your known consent to share my lot
 To joy their dool would turn.

“ Now, shortly, dearest, I must go
 To plough wide ocean's plain ;
Will Mary vow to be my bride
 When I come back again ? ”

Emotion stay'd the wish'd reply :
But smiles assured his breast ;
The pressure of her hand made Tom
Above all suitors blest.

Time fled on swift impatient wing
Each day the lovers met ;
The sun scarce seem'd to quit the East
When in the West he set.

By Ballivain or West Port shore,
Or o'er their smiling braes,
(Where summer suns at eventide
Diffuse their fairest rays),

Or by fantastic wave-scoop'd rocks
Or shingle-covered creeks,
Where oft, in storms, the sea-bird faint
A cozy shelter seeks,

The lovers stroll'd, and sketched their hopes
Of future blissful times,
When, haply, they would th' ocean cross
To visit distant climes.

Once when the tide receded far
Beyond the wonted line,
They stepp'd from shell-clad rock to rock
Across the shallow brine.

A furlong westward from the beach,
Where West Port cottage stands,
There tow'rs a rock against whose face
The wave its fury spends.

Extreme of rocks that stud the verge
Of this scarr'd, rugged coast,
It rears its front when neighbouring crags
In surging floods are lost.

On the western side its seaward part
Projects with outline bold,
Which playful fancy has compared
Unto the human mould.

"Maid of the sea" it has been called ;
For when the tempests play
A maiden's form confronts their wrath,
Defiant of their sway.

Thither the lovers shaped their course,
And found a choice retreat,
While wavelets playfully disport
Around their island seat.

Full many a stately gallant "craft"
Swept o'er the distant main—
A pleasing scene, yet, with its charms,
It shadow'd parting's pain.

“ By yonder course, my lovely girl,
I'll shortly quit this shore ;
Oh ! could my vision thence descry
Your sweet salute once more.

“ From the cradle of the tallest mast
I'll stretch my gaze afar
To catch a glance of Mary's smile—
My fancy's guiding star.

“ And now, my jewel, let me put
Upon your finger fair,
This symbol ring, that, till your death,
I pray you guard and wear.

“ And as (you see) the rising tide
Again now seeks the shore,
Thus shall I seek this spot, I trust,
Before a twelvemonth's o'er.”

Somehow a spell of nameless pow'r
The islet now possess'd ;
They longer stayed, did not the tide
A quick escape suggest.

A few days more of growing bliss
Like visions pass'd away,
When Time with hasty stride brought round
The sad, the parting day.

With many a tender, fond embrace,
'Mid sighs, and vows, and care,
The sweethearts bade their last adieu,
And breath'd devotion's pray'r.

I mote not say if chance or choice
Did part them at the stone,
Where Tom last saw his sister Jane,
"Hard by the neat-herd's loan."

Here Heckler Ned got leave to rest,
With prompt consent of host and guest.
Stiff draughts of Voolin's homebrew'd ale
His tongue and spirit both regale.
"Meanwhile," observ'd the prudent Ned,
"Let one address you in my stead.
While luntin pipe and breath I draw
You'll hear the voice of Charlie Shaw."
The embryo student of Burnside
The needed interlude supplied :—

THE HERALD.

At the head of Longrow there lived the good dean,
In whom scarce a failing you'd find;
Whose ceaseless delight was to comfort the poor,
The lonely, the halt, and the blind.

With a father's devotion he toil'd morn and eve
To replenish the barrel of meal;
Yet the blessings of time were but second with him
To his children's enduring weal.

The heir of his fortunes, a mild looking youth,
Instructed to parse and to read,
Was duly selected to herald the truth,
And heathens from errors to lead.

To furnish the weapons for labour so stern,
All ethical works were supplied;
His table was groaning with orthodox tomes,
The wayward or doubtful to guide.

Huge volumes on morals for young and for old
Lay pile upon pile to the ceiling;
But the herald was partial to comical rhymes,
Which he conn'd and recited with feeling.

Perhaps you may fancy his volumes divine
Might grace the recess of a temple ;
They might ; but the "study" was scarcely so fine,
As you'll glean from the following sample.

As you enter'd the door of the house from the street,
You confronted a trap or a ladder,
Whose top was attach'd by a hook or a cleek ;
At the base was a bucket of water.

To steady the weary or solace the feeble,
The steps at short distance were placed ;
From above there descended a piece of a cable
Which the herald had skilfully spliced.

One hand on the wall, and the rope in the other,
The linguist soar'd up to the garret ;
In darkness he vanish'd ; no one could discover
Why so fast through the op'ning he hurried.

Now, just take a fancy to creep up the ladder,
And, peering from under the hatch,
You see a short cutty, and shag on a paper,
And hard by a lucifer match.

In a corner the wight is now cutting a caper,
Or humming a comical ditty,
Regardless of necktie and minus a slipper,
But eyeing the trap and his cutty.

He scratches a match ; see how knowingly now
The dottle he pricks with a needle.
See the snug little cap he has placed on his pipe,
And drill'd with small holes like a riddle.

One hears of the glories of prelates and kings,
The triumphs of wit and of beauty,
But, for peerless felicity, of all earthly boons,
See Hugh with his shag and his cutty !

Old Homer and Virgil, and Milton and Dante,
Might have revell'd in truth or in fable ;
But their joys were as feathers when balanced with
 Hugh's,
As he smoked with his legs on the table.

Alexander the Great, and Cæsar the greater,
Might boast of the foes they had routed ;
But Hugh was dispersing antagonists rarer,
And ne'er said a whisper about it.

These Captains encounter'd brave men like themselves,
Though matchless in tactics and dodging ;
Well, Hugh had whole legions of trials to stand
In languages, ethics, and logic.

Each morning he rose battalions of roots,
Exegetical theses and science,
Erected their banners, and vow'd to upset him
Before he got dubb'd with a licence.

To scatter these hosts from the eye of his fancy
He planted a match on the dottle,
In smoke and confusion the enemy vanish'd!—
Hugh cared not for trials a bodle.

But, hark ! his father is climbing the ladder,
An odour of goodness diffusing—
The herald was also diffusing an odour
As he revell'd in puffing and musing.

Then Cruden's Concordance or good Matthew Henry
At once was spread out on the table ;
The cutty was buried, and Gulliver's travels
Adroitly slipped under the Bible.

Refresh'd with this show of canonical duty,
And attention to Cruden's directions,
The dean would judiciously creep o'er the garret
For fear of disturbing reflections !

But the hopeful had artfully chosen a portion,
Where passages stirring abounded ;
And read them with feeling and earnest exertion
Till the walls of the garret resounded.

Perhaps he was spouting the triumphs of Moses,
Or Noah's release from the flood ;
How slily he moan'd out the tender narration,
While near him his guardian stood !

How he thundered when Samson's revenge was the
theme,

When the temple he crush'd into clay ;
But when he recited the whale and the prophet,
The sire turn'd, melted, away.

But as soon as his beaver was under the hatch,
The mask was at once laid aside ;
'Twas Henry no longer ; e'en Cruden gave place
To the tale of the Lammermuir bride.

The parent believing the student well stored
With learning and fervour sufficient
To tutor the heathen that lived at his door,
And make them in ethics proficient ;

Himself being engaged,—his hands full of work—
Still sorry at doing so little—
Thought Hugh with his learning and logic prepared—
The neighbours' loose notions to settle.

One morning when Hugo had finish'd a chapter
On Quixote the Don with his sabre,
He hied to his vineyard and posed as a sage
Who could tackle a heretic neighbour.

With a bundle of tracts on duties fraternal,
And stories of mythical robbers,
Together with records of terrible warning
For truants and prodigal toppers,

On his mission of love to the pagans around
He takes leave, for a while, of his shag ;
And cautiously arm'd he proceeds to do battle
With the sceptic, the sot, and the wag.

That apostles were ordered to carry no staves,
He often heard pastors repeating,[!]
But ne'er saw a law 'gainst showing a dirk,
In case he got hints of a beating.

In the course of his errand of brotherly love,
Oh ! horrors ! he rapp'd with his knuckle
At the hallan where flourish'd M'Crackens, a pair
Unequall'd for breeding a scuffle.

As the snick was raised up with a black rosin-end,
And the door opened wide by the mother,
The bearer of peace held a dirk in one hand
A tract on true love in the other.

The dame with a smile of respectful decorum
Accepted the tract with a courtesy ;
Then spier'd for his father, his mother and Rob,
For Tommy, for Katie, and Betsey.

While the smiling distributor answer'd her queries
He sees a M'Cracken before him
Revolving a gully and dreadfully hinting
He sighs for occasion to bore him.

The savage young scamp made a rush for the door,
Yet luckily dropping his weapon :
Else, hide from us, sacred Humanity's pow'rs !
What horrible havoc might happen.

As the herald, admonish'd, made off through the close ;
With such leaps as a trembler could take,
Who should enter the passage just right in his face,
But the elder M'Cracken—a rake !

In front stood the ogre 'twixt freedom and him ;
His rear was assail'd by his brother ;
The herald might stiffen them one at a time,
But hardly the couple together.

Telegraphic grimaces the younger one grinn'd
To the elder, blockading the close ;
The moment was precious—he rushes on Hugh,
And straight at his bosom he goes.

Hugh's weapon had dropp'd—no time to regain it ;
Unavailing were all his objections ;
The beardless M'Crackens were thirsting for war,
And scouted his timid prelections.

Some parcels of tracts lay peaceful and scattered
Till the herald would *do for a brother* ;
He battered the shins and the knees of the one,
While he flattened the nose of the other.

Forgiving an enemy was law for the Jews,
But Hugh thought the Crackens excluded ;
And the orthodox view must unsettled remain
Till the present encounter concluded.

The other cheek also he turned, to be sure ;—
'Twas the cheek of the Crackens he turned—
For somewhat confused he fail'd to recall
Which sense of the passage he learned.

As they roll'd over layers of texts on forgiving,
Relieving distress in a brother,
Returning for evil the good we can do,
And cheering the heart of a mother,

His rivals unfettered with subtle distinctions,
Regardless of fathers or mothers,
Gave passion full reins—yet they practised one
 grace—
They stuck to each other like brothers.

To Hugh they stuck also, embracing him tight,
Reluctant to part from his side ;
So the prospect was fair that the militant wight
A martyr for tracts would have died !

Before him was staring in characters plain
A text against mauling a brother ;

A picture of Abel and passionate Cain,
And the form of a sorrowing mother.

Yet, nathless, the herald kept pounding his foes,—
The pests and the dread of the borough—
Now cleaving a shin or peeling a nose
While globules were flushing the furrow !

The powers of darkness and light had thus struggled—
The light being nearly extinguished—
When the door was heard creaking ; the combatants
 bolting
Their battle-field quickly relinquish'd.

Though dozens of families waited for pamphlets
And wondered why nobody brought them,
Poor Hugh had encountered two spirits of malice
Resisted the demons and fought them.

Now with lumps on his visage, and gore on his
 collar—

The tokens of zeal in the cause—
He clears with a bound two stoups and a barrow
And bolts like a shot from the close.

Like a generous foe he bequeath'd all his tracts
For the good of the Crackens and kin,
In the hope that in digging a hole in their pates
He was clearing the vision within.

Having thus done his work more by deeds than by
words—

Which is ever the marrow of duty—
The pugilist herald retreats to his garret,
His novel, his shag, and his cutty.

The student here gives place to Ned,
Who thus re-knits his record's thread :—

MARY OF THE DRUM.

SOME tedious years had pass'd since Tom
To Mary bade adieu,
When home to Greenock town returned
The stately barque "Gentoo."

The ship's arrival at the "Port"
To many soon was known ;
Yet Mary wist not of the fact
Till days and weeks had flown.

Surprise and sorrow in their turn
The longing maid possess'd ;
Inquiries at each friend might well
Her restless care attest.

In silent thought the maid would ask :

“ Oh ! why has Tom denied
To *me* the news that 's known to all,
To all the world beside ?

“ Can it be true he has abjured
The vows he made to me ?
And does he wear a heart as false
As the wild inconstant sea ?

“ No ! Faithless I'll not deem my lad,
Till better proof I have ;
The rock seems emblem of his heart
And not the changeful wave.

“ Mayhap with fever stricken down,
Or other ailment tried,
My dear young man must keep his couch,
With no one at his side.

“ Then, should I not betimes prepare
For Greenock port to start,
To learn what cause restrains his pen
Or alienates his heart ? ”

For Greenock, then, anon she sailed,
And sought the stout “ Gentoo,”
To know her lover's fate—to *her*
The noblest of the crew.

She hied her to the shipping quay
With steps now quick, now slow,
For near approach the question raised :
“ Is ’t safe the worst to know ? ”

In groups upon the vessel’s deck
“ Hands ” told their ’scapes and hopes ;
Here, some were pulling at a chain,
There, some were splicing ropes.

The maiden scann’d with wistful eye
Each group at stem and stern,
But failed to spy the winsome lad
Whose fate she came to learn.

Then leaning o’er the vessel’s side,
She says in accents meek :
“ If Thomas Wilson’s now on board
I fain would with him speak.”

The mariners direct a glance
To where the maiden stood ;
Then instantly to grief and gloom
They change their merry mood.

’Neath sorrow’s weight they bow’d their heads,
But answer gave they none,
For all recall’d the maiden’s loss,
And felt it as their own.

“Will none of you my doubts dispel?”

Thus spake the maid again—

“Oh! tell me if my lover's lost?

For silence whets my pain.”

Though officers and men could tell

Tom Wilson was not there,

Yet each the answer shirk'd that might

Astound the damsel fair.

Press'd o'er and o'er by Mary's tones

To state the worst or best,

Some yielded to her sad appeal

To set her doubts at rest.

One of their number they depute

To guide her to the deck,

Then lead her to the vessel's chief,

Who should the secret break.

(Now, Mary, note who guides your way,

And ready service lends.

What well begins sometimes 'tis found,

In sheer delusion ends.)

The captain in his cabin-room

To Mary's tale gave ear,

Then softly broke the chilling truth

She dreaded much to hear :

“ Fain would I give you happy news,
My young, uneasy maid ;
But pardon the unwelcome sound :—
Your lover, Wilson’s *dead!*”

With calm endurance Mary bore
The shaft that galled her heart ;
’Tis thus a bird with wounded wing
O’erspreads the fatal dart.

(The pang is less when those have gone
That loved us till the last,
Than when the living cease to prove
The love they once profess’d.)

“ In duty’s course your gallant lad
Met mortals’ final foe ;
Minute details another tongue
I’ll charge to let you know.

“ Tom Wilson’s chest with all the gear
He own’d until his death,
I purposed to entrust to one
In whom I place all faith.

“ For further news consult that man
That led you to my room ;
Bound for a trip to Campbelton
He’ll be your escort home.

“ And here in memory of *your* “*love,*”
And officer of mine,
Accept this watch—’t was mine for long—
Still longer be it thine.”

A silver watch and golden chain
He placed within her hands ;
Then piously the mourning maid
To heaven he commends.

THE WRECKER.

JOE CAINE—the convoy of the girl—
No stranger to Kintyre—
Was keenly prone to grant the aid
The damsel might require.

Nor loath was she (now homewards turn'd)
His company to share,
Who could her sweetheart's early death,
With all details make clear.

Enfeebled health he urged as cause
Why change of scene he chose,
And near the Drum there lives, he said,
A friend or two he knows.

And by and by the Drum they reach
Where both a welcome find ;
And soon her household reckon'd Caine
An inmate leal and kind.

And Mary's parents, like herself
Ne'er tired to hear his tale,
How Wilson sank beneath the waves
And perish'd in a gale ;—

“ Our pinnacle from a craggy isle
Beyond the Chilian shore,
Had ‘ started,’ charged with water casks,
And urged by sail and oar,

“ When sudden gusts from leeward side
The swollen canvas smote ;
The sail struck Wilson, standing high,
And swept him from the boat.

“ Prompt had I follow’d o’er the stern
T’ avert his coming fate,
Were ’t not I caught a stunning blow
That stretch’d me on my seat.

“ The rising blasts persuaded haste
To reach the tall ‘ Gentoo ;’
And soon the curling billows’ crests
Hid Wilson from our view.”

’Twas thus, at Drum, from day to day,
That fiction (laced with truth)
Increased within the hearts of all
A fondness for the youth.

Domestic secrets, one by one,
They openly discuss’d ;
And soon the stranger even learned
The wealth of Wilson’s chest.

The bracing air of Ballivain
And the generous cheer of Drum
Brought livelier prospects to his views,
And pith with youthful bloom.

Now, on a day he urged the maid
Her visit to renew
To that same rock where Tom and she
Had blissful interview.

Thereon they celebrate the day
When some twelvemonths before
The happy pair in laden sighs
Renew'd their pledge once more.

Awhile they sat upon the rock—
But mused on opposite themes—
The love-sick maid indulged her grief,
Caine worked his wily schemes.

The maid, absorbed in sorrow's trance,
Could neither see nor say
When from the rock (the tide in flood)
Caine deftly slipp'd away.

And little wist she that the tide
Was swiftly rushing in,
And that ere half an hour had run
T' attempt escape were vain.

Much less could she the omens read
Of fast approaching storms :
But Caine had mark'd the rising flood
And tempests' outward forms.

In haste he hurried to the Drum
And sought the maiden's home,
Where artfully he feign'd excuse
Why he alone had come.

“In Mary's service” (thus he said),
And at her strong request,
He came to fetch the casket rare
That's hidden in her chest.

“Some letters that her lover wrote
She would again peruse ;”
To bring her watch and chain as well
He fram'd a fair excuse.

The deed is done, “the gear is *his* !
And safe from all on earth ;”
Stay, Caine ; will 't bear the breath of time
And yield its fancied worth !

The time-worn road to Cashen brae,
Well seen from shore and dell,
Caine covered hastily as one
Whom crime and dread impel.

The shades of eve now mantled o'er
The distant shore and dale ;
And gathering clouds whirl through the sky
Before the fitful gale.

He look'd—and yet he feared to look—
Towards the maiden's rock ;
For, more than wont, against his ribs
His troubled heart would knock.

His base ingratitude and crime
Rose, hideous, to his view,
And back for Drum, at conscience' beck,
He strode a pace or two.

But Nature's bias turn'd the scale,
And Reason kick'd the beam ;
And soon was stifled that soft voice
That might his will reclaim.

His better angel thus he spurn'd,
And turn'd upon his heel ;
But to his conscience Heav'n's voice
Soon made a new appeal.

For, issuing from an humble cot,
The notes of solemn praise
Woke memories of an uncle's home
And thoughts of purer days.

'Tis not for mortals to declare
What motives tore his breast,
As towards the smithy door he steered
And turned aside in haste.

“ Good ev'ning, blacksmith ! ” “ Same to you, ”
Blandly the smith return'd,
(Than Bauldy's, ne'er had stouter arms
Fatigue or leisure spurn'd).

“ Some business calls me to the shore
Ere darkness dense sets in,
The route being rough, 'tis somewhat late
The journey to begin. ”

“ Too late for even natives born
To tempt the road and storm ;
A stranger anyhow should shun
The risk at least of harm. ”

“ Not such a stranger in these parts
As doubtlessly I seem,
And by the aid of guarded light
I'd steer by Tangy's stream.

“ A lantern would that aid supply ;
Now have you such to spare ?
For such a boon on such a night
I'd pay what seemeth fair. ”

“ A lantern, doubly cased I have—
A present from a friend—
The gift I'll neither sell nor swop,
But heartily will lend.

“ Reflecting lenses round the flame
Converge a dazzling light ;
And for some miles across the main
It streams a pencil bright.”

“ Such ‘ streaming ’ virtues need I not,”
Caine answer'd with a smile ;
Enough if one brief yard engross
The rays that mete a mile.”

“ But, stranger, pray what is your name ? ”

“ And where do you abide ? ”

“ Wilson's my name,” quoth Caine ; “ but here
Nowhere do I reside.

“ My home's in town, and thither soon
I purpose to return ;
But fear not for your lantern bright :
Dishonesty I scorn.”

“ Forgive my words,” quoth Cashen's smith,
“ If aught of what I've said
Suspicion of your honest faith
Unluckily convey'd.

“Your name is Wilson ! Well, ’tis strange :
A namesake young and brave
(Tom Wilson of the Barns, now gone !)
To me the lantern gave.

“The dear memento would I not
For scores of others swop ;
To-morrow then at leisure time
Return it to the shop.”

Scarce had the latest accents dropp’d
On Caine’s impatient ear,
When both the lantern and he
Were seen to disappear.

Down Cashen brae he strode with haste
As one to caution lost ;
Then Tangy burn adown the glen
With growing speed he crossed.

Silent and still stood Campbell’s Mill
As Caine swept past its gate ;
He courted not, though winds blew fierce,
This lone but snug retreat.

As near the bouldery shore he drew
By paths unsafe for man,
His ear was startled by a whine
And wailing in the glen.

That wailing might resemble hers
Whom but two hours before
The knave imprisoned on a rock,
That neighbours West Port shore.

(So guilty souls in harmless sounds
Arraigning angels hear ;
'Twas thus at sight of every man
Caine felt a murderer's fear.)

'Twas but the wild cat's mimic wail,
As o'er the scaurs it prowl'd
For nests that on all raiders else
A stern defiance howl'd.

Upon the footpath near the bridge
That now with arch so wide
O'erspans the yawning gully scoop'd
By Tangy's moorland tide,

Caine paused a moment as in doubt
To turn to left or right :
To seek and save the rock-bound maid,
Or ply a wrecker's light !

Northward he turn'd and quickly pass'd
Clark's topsy-turvy rock,
Whose sides flung back the chafing waves,
But trembled with the shock.

A mile beyond, a turf-built lodge,
Where Currie stored his kelp,
Caine lately scann'd and felt assured
It might his purpose help.

A flickering beam from Allan's cruse
Betray'd his lodge's seat.
'Twas there the ruthless prowler meant
To claim a night's retreat.

Approaching near the snick-closed door
He heard with dread surprise
What seem'd an ev'ning song of praise
In broken tones arise.

Even *he* recoil'd from inroad rude
On lone Devotion's form,
And waited till the service closed,
Though shivering in the storm !

Heav'n's couriers seem'd to foster schemes
Ev'n yet to stay his course,
And strike repentance in his breast
Ere warnings lost their force.

Caine gently knock'd at Allan's door,
Who begg'd him to come in ;
Thither the caitiff entered, glad
Such vantage-ground to win.

So does an owl on softest wing
Her stealthy visits pay ;
On covert bough she keeps the shade
And watches for her prey.

“ Whence came you here,” the Kelper ask’d ;
And wherefore are ye come ?
On such a night the famish’d wolf
Would scarcely leave her home.

“ How came you by that lantern bright
You carry in your hand ?
Methinks I saw’t with Cashen’s smith
One evening on the strand.”

“ You’re right, old man, the lantern’s *his* ;
He lent me’t for a day ;
This night I mean to fix it high
Somewhere along this bay.

“ To-night a comrade steers a sloop
From Gigha’s barren isle ;
Some days ago I made him know
I’d tarry here a while.

“ This signal will inform my friend
That here I still sojourn ;
The managed light will also tell
What day I may return.

“ Now, where shall I the beacon fix
To carry out my plan?
And where 's the height that 's tall enough?
Can you advise, sage man?”

The good man's eye no guile discern'd
Beneath the felon's schemes ;
The mirky forms of demon wiles
Were lost in Faith's bright beams.

“ 'Tis little Allan's fit to do
In labour hard or nice,
But where experience may avail
He gives a fair advice.

“ Erect a pole I have outside
Against my gable wall ;
Secure it with a rope or two
To stay the risk of fall.”

With specious show of gratitude
(A virtue sometime dead !)
Caine hail'd the sage expedient
That sprang from Allan's head.

The pole is set, the lamp is rais'd,
And far its flame extends ;
And thus good Allan witless aid
To fell deception lends.

An hour of various talk elapsed,
And midnight's gloom was come,
When Caine consults his silver watch,
—'Twas Mary's of the Drum !

Fell horror for a minute thrill'd
Each fibre of his frame,
As soon 's the stolen gear recalled
The rightful owner's name.

His trembling fingers turn'd the key
To wind the watch's spring,
When suddenly the coil gave way
And snapp'd with weird ring.

Old Allan, who had laid him down
To pluck a brief repose,
Observed his lodger's alter'd mien,
And half, in bed, he rose.

“What ails thee, youngster, that thy mood
Has changed from glee to gloom?
Dost fret at lack of generous fare,
Or comfort in my room?”

“Be easy, friendly host, nor think
Your wholesome fare I scorn,
And when I'm weary of your hut,
Why, hence I may return.

“ You noted (though I felt it not)
My change to gloom from glee ;
Such varying moods are mark'd in those
Who 've pass'd some years at sea.

“ My watch's spring—you may have heard—
Has oddly snapp'd in twain,
Exactly when the double hands
The coming day began.”

“ Unlucky accident, be sure,”
Quoth Allan with dismay ;
“ 'Tis omen dire if watch springs snap
When night gives place to day.

“ 'Tis said that human lives are lost
Where such mishap takes place !
May bliss be ours, if Heav'n is pleased
This night to end our 'race.' ”

In the plotter's throat Amen stuck fast,
He dreaded nought but pray'r ;
Then, heedless of Saint Allan's wish,
He said with careless air :

“ Since thus my watch has wholly ceased
To note time's silent flight,
I'll take conjecture for my guide
An hour or so to-night.

“ The lantern’s blaze at intervals
I purpose to conceal ;
Thus to my cronie in the sloop
My plans I’ll best reveal.

“ And by this time, if reckoning fair
‘Directs my wit aright,
A ‘ craft ’ in course from Gigha’s isle
Should see my hoisted light.

“ To keep my word I’ll venture out,
And face the sturdy storm ;
And should I stay an hour abroad,
Don’t feel the least alarm.”

But ere beyond the door he pass’d,
The saintly cottar pray’d
That all on sea might refuge find
In Him whom storms obey’d.

“ Let those on land their mercies own,
And ask for quiet rest
From passions’ storms more dangerous still
That wreck the human breast.”

Shortly the hermit closed his eyes
In gentle peace and trust,
And slept the sleep that Heav’n awards
As birthright of “ the just.”

But while his mind and body rest,
 'Tis otherwise with Caine ;
Now see him on his tiptoes stand,
 And, wild, his optics strain !

Is yon a massive mountain surge
 That's looming on the deep ?
Or is 't a struggling vessel's form
 That fails her course to keep ?

Her keel has struck against a reef,
 Where seals court summer suns ;
She backward reels, a mastless hulk,
 And straight on ruin runs.

Tempestuous billows swift and strong
 The craft o'er ledges fling ;
And soon with screams from gallant tars
 The caverns ceased to ring.

But not till Tangytavil's hind
 (Whose sleep the tempest broke)
O'erheard the shrieks that from the cliffs
 Heartrending echoes woke.

He roused the inmates of the farm
 In kitchen and in spence :
All quit their couch at what they deem
 The call of Providence.

Much grieved they see upon the strand
A stranger with a lamp,
Who, soon as he observed their forms,
Seem'd eager to decamp.

He might, they thought, be one of those
Who form'd a vessel's crew ;
For that a ship had perish'd there
Appeared too plainly true.

Succeeding groups from neighbouring farms,
As day began to break,
Converge on Tangytavil's bay
To view the latest wreck.

(And many a wreck the natives see
From Balnakill to Moil.)
Some come to offer needed aid
And some to search for spoil.

Before the sun had reach'd the stage
Where ends his upward flight
Some scores had gathered from the glens,
From hamlet, creek, and bight.

Some hailing from far-famed Glenbarr,
And ev'n from Largiemore,
And bands from Lossit and "the Pans,"
Now tread the ghastly shore.

Men rough in speech and outward form,
 'Mid sobs and sighs, regard
Th' appalling triumphs of the storm
 Spread o'er the beach and sward.

And here and there the still remains
 Of stalwart men and brave,
Some resting, part upon a ledge,
 And part beneath the wave.

And one in choicer raiment clad
 Lay high upon the shore ;
The spot, engraved with tracks and grooves,
 Signs of a struggle bore.

And close beside, a journal lay
 In language there unknown ;
Of all the words the *scholars* scann'd
 They knew *Stockholm* alone.

From that same spot (unless the "hind"
 From Tangytavil err'd)
The stranger with a leathern bag
 So nimbly disappeared.

Thus Portnamarv—the dead men's port—
 Tradition names this bay,
And claims as graves the massy mounds
 That flank the public way.

A later woe the name confirms ;
For there a gallant son
Swam back to save a brother's life,
And, failing, lost his own.

“ Now, where is Allan of the ‘ hut ’ ? ”
Asked Sandy of Killean ;
“ None could so well the record tell
Of this soul-racking scene.

“ Perhaps he shelters in his ‘ store ’
A remnant of the crew,
Or guides them by ascending routes
Till hamlets come in view.”

On this a youth of nimble pace
Came posting from the “ store,”
And thus reported what he heard
Beside its flimsy door :—

“ Now mark me, stranger,” quoth the seer,
In stern and loud appeals,
“ You'll rue your wild, satanic plot,
Ere death your eyelids seals.

“ Dost think because you wheedled me
In yon unguarded hour,
You can elude th' unerring glance
Of Heav'n's omniscient power ?

“ Were not my Faith confirm’d and tried
Almost as long’s my years,
I might renounce the creed that Heav’n
With mortals interferes.

“ Dire retribution may not soon
Requite your fiendish deed ;
But, if I’m shrewd, *both you and yours*
On other’s bread shall feed.

“ But even now I’ll think the best
If that bag you resign ;
Surrender should not rack your breast ;
It would unburden mine.”

“ Leave off, old man ; your pleading ’s vain,”
Replied the stranger bold ;
“ While you, by faith, hope future gain,
Let me the present hold.”

While thus he spake he raised the snick
Of Allan’s cottage door ;
Then vanish’d with the leathern bag
Direct for Tangy shore.

That eve with casket in his hand
He slunk to Paisley Glen ;
Though search was made the wrecker loon
Eluded dogs and men.

MARY OF THE DRUM.

WITH pensive yet with grateful heart
Fair Mary gave consent ;
Three years of grief o'er Wilson's fate
She had already spent.

Now Neil, who watch'd her on the rock
And snatch'd her from the sea,
Besought her for a fair return
For love and gallantry.

Industrious, sober, and upright,
In wealth and worth he grew ;
So far, the pledge the maiden gave
She'd little cause to rue.

A day was named and duly set
To taste a change of air ;
And for a brief excursion trip
They gleefully prepare.

“A business scheme with pleasures bound,”
(Said Neil) “I could combine,
If down to Greenock we should sail
To visit friends of mine.

“Then would my Mary’s fancy run
In Neilie’s chosen groove ;
Or does some other favourite route
More welcome feelings move ?”

“Your will’s my pleasure, gallant lad ;
I’ll go where you would go ;
Though Greenock ships might feelings rouse
’T were best I should not show.”

“Believe me, Mary, that old flame
That smoulders in your heart,
In Neil no jealousy awakes
Nor wings a goading dart.

“The favour you so long bestowed
Upon another’s name,
Is pledge, dear girl, for *me* (I trow)
You’d feed as fond a flame.”

From Broomielaw’s green shrubby banks
They took the ebbing tide ;
Anon they hail’d the plucky town
That rules the nether Clyde.

Upon the quay awhile they stood,
By diverse feelings sway’d ;
No care had *he* ; while on *her* heart
Remembered sorrows prey’d.

'Tis seen that what the will would shun
Our fancies often woo ;
That impulse prompts to chase the lure
Our Reason would eschew.

Thus Mary, mindful, fain would fly
The scenes of bygone pain ;
But still her steps—she knew not why—
Led thither back again.

Half-conscious, soon the maiden found
She reach'd the spot anew
Where years ago she stepp'd on board
The gallant ship "Gentoo."

Half round she wheel'd with sudden turn
To hide her rising grief,
When Neilie, guessing something wrong,
Made haste to her relief.

A clumsy hawser from a ship,
Unseen, his movement stopp'd,
And tripp'd the fond, incautious lad,
Who o'er the breast-work dropp'd !

While Mary, shrieking with alarm,
Collaps'd and swoon'd away,
A gallant "tar" sprang from the ship
And leapt into the sea.

The luckless victim of the tide
With wary hand he grasp'd ;
But, keen for life, the sailor's neck
The sinking struggler clasp'd.

Yet none among the gathering crowd—
Spectators of the sight—
Appear'd inclined to risk his life
In aid of either wight.

But see ! Advancing through the throng,
A stalwart form draws near,
Who saw, in time, the drowning men
About to disappear !

He asks not at the gaping crowd
How both had fallen in ;
But quick 's an arrow down he dropp'd
To float the sinking men.

As one who, blending pluck with art,
In danger skill displays,
With aid of rope he rescues both
'Mid long and loud huzzas.

Nor lingered he upon the Quay
(When once his feat was done),
To hear still further from the crowd
The plaudits he had won.

Almost as quickly as he show'd
His presence at the first,
With hasty and impatient foot
Through closing ranks he burst.

Yet not until the rescued pair
Re-ope their languid eyes,
And gratefully their saver's risk
And service recognize.

The brave deliverer's retreat
Was noticed but by few ;
And fewer mark'd him as he seem'd
Retiring from their view.

To Cathcart Square's far-noted Inn—
The seamen's favourite howff—
The drench'd and shivering stranger hied
His dripping dress to doff.

As towards a window in the Inn
The hero posted bye,
The profile of a well-known face
Arrests his vacant eye.

He entered, doubly startled now
Through danger and surprise ;
And ask'd who might the maiden be
Whose features caught his eyes.

“She’s from St Mungo’s,” they replied,
“A native of Argyle ;
But should we boast we further know
Your ears we should beguile.”

“Pray, may I now the favour beg
Before the maid to stand ;
And in her presence, eye to eye,
A moment’s space to spend ?”

“No, no ; it shall not, cannot be,
Though high you ’d deem the boon ;
For scarcely has the maiden yet
Recovered from a swoon.

“Some days of quiet, peaceful rest
The invalid requires ;
Thus hopeless, stranger, is your suit
Until that time expires ;

“But ere the moon, now young and thin,
Has run but half her round,
At Buckhead Inn, in Glasgow town,
The damsel may be found.”

“My swelling hopes are dash’d once more,”
The stranger, sad, replied ;
“Be ’t so ; one boon I crave, and trust
It shall not be denied :

“ Inform the maid, when strength’s restored,
 Her case a lover mourns ;
 And add a name she once much prized—
 ‘ Tom Wilson of the Barns ! ”

THE NAMELESS TREASURE.

IN front of Old Saint Mungo’s College Gate,
 Which now attests the whims of fickle fate ;
 Where rushing crowds regardless of its fame
 Omit th’ obeisance sacred ashes claim ;
 Where snorting trains and trade’s metallic roar
 Profane the solemn Classic Courts of yore ;
 On th’ opposite side, but higher up the street,
 Of this renown’d but now demolish’d seat,
 Beside a howff, for youths of antic ways,
 Where Hadden plied his trade in later days,
 A table used to stand (so runs the tale)
 Surcharg’d with books exposed for auction sale.

Here might be seen, in rude disorder hurl’d,
 The learnèd tome that once entranced the world ;
 And close beside reposed the minstrel’s lay
 That charmed the past and charms no less to-day ;
 The sceptic’s whims deck’d out with siren wile
 To drug the reckless and his hopes beguile ;
 The modest tract,—the earnest author’s type—
 Rebutting doctrines showy, but unripe ;

By turns they each the student's notice drew
And quoted age to prove their themes were true.
On each the former owner's names were traced,
With specious mottoes, marks, or titles graced,
Ev'n where the subject-theme received the brand
Of virtue's scowl throughout each Christian land,
The proud possessor, scorning gadding fame,
Upon the frontispiece inscribed his name.

Beneath this mass, just now transferr'd to-day,
A massive volume long unnoticed lay ;
Its gilded edges, once compress'd and bright,
Now crimp'd and tarnished, scarce reflect the light.
A priz'd possession once it doubtless was,
Though symbol now of fortune's fickle laws.
The Sacred Book (for such it chanced to be)
Now waits a "bode" to change its destiny.

A leaf where met its records, new and old,
In different "hands," both graceful, free and bold,
Displays two names in mystic union join'd,
With place and date in order due combined.

The names were John . . . and Mary . . . names
most dear,

In every age, abroad as well as here ;
The Christian name alone remained intact ;
The riven leaf the double surname lack'd.

Yet time there was when this same tattered page
Would beaming eyes and loving hearts engage :
The happy bride who, moved with modest glee,

Invited friends her marriage gifts to see,
With keenest pleasure would the page unfold
That show'd her faith and eke her marriage told ;
Though work or time her partner should remove,
The silent leaflet would attest his love ;
His solemn promise constant to remain
Such holy sanction nowhere else could gain.
With glowing zeal the loving partners view'd
The lines that oft their early joys renew'd.

Why did they part, then, with the cherished book,
Or tear their surnames from their hallow'd nook ?
Ah ! who can tell what influence shed its blight
On former scenes of promise and delight ?
In life's stern struggle did the husband fail,
And lose the field where frauds alone prevail ?
Did thriftless ventures scourge his lust for gain
And swell the crowd of dire Misfortune's train ?
Did wife or husband (dare we ask, if both ?)
Forswear the Bible and its tenets loathe ?
Did baleful fancies nobler views supplant,
That nerve the patriot and refine the saint ?
Or had its precepts fail'd to shape their way,
Till first they ceased to read, then scorn'd to pray ?
From step to step, descending in their course,
Did crime awake and then defy remorse ?
Reduced at last to hopeless want and shame
Did former splendour bid them hide their name ?
Though, for the cause that wrought the rueful
change,

Sage speculation long may vainly range,
Yet, if a relic can affect the heart,
'Tis a "Family Bible" at an Auction Mart!
Of all the members of th' attentive throng
Who heard its value from the salesman's tongue,
One bidder only, passing by the way,
And tempted but a minute's space to stay,
In sportive frolic made a random "bode,"
Procured the Book, and straight resumed his road.

His hastening steps a watchful wight pursues,
Resolv'd ('twould seem) his course he should not
lose,

O'ertakes him near St George's busy square
And thus accosts him with a pensive air :—
"The volume, sir, you now have bought so cheap,
Longer than I, I trust you'll prize and keep.
Misfortune forced me to resign a gift
A generous uncle as an heirloom left.
Another dear memento of the same
I still possess, and yet (I say 't with shame)
I'll sell to him who owns the relic tome,
That both once more may find a common home.
A silver watch, both regular and sound,
I hereby offer for a single pound.
A transient sentiment, I know not why,
Suggests the offer I so warmly ply.
The twin memorials as in days of yore
I fain would learn adorn'd one owner's store."

At first surprised at freedom thus display'd,
But moved at length by what th' intruder said,
The new possessor of the sacred Book
Regards his follower with a searching look,
Then sternly notes: "A pavement's scarce the place
To buy a relic and its history trace;
And should the petty trogger further dare
To dog his heels beyond the busy Square,
He'd make appeal to constituted 'force'
To stop his begging or a purpose worse."

He had not ended his severe rebuke
When from his fob the kern a time-piece took;
Something unusual in its form and style
Arrests his eye and stays his gaze awhile;
With softened tone the "merchant" he addressed
Replacing threatenings with a mild request:—

"Withdraw—an't please you—to a fitter spot
Where I may test the treasure you have got."
Argyll Street offered them a snug retreat,
And in "Buckhead" the casual traders meet.

Supplied with Scotia's potent "mountain dew,"
That fires the sluggish and unveils the true,
They soon engaged in general, friendly chat,
And for a while the "business" they forgot.

"Now," quoth the buyer, "this I fain would know
What grave disaster brought your state so low
As thus to part so readily with a gift,
A friend, you say, as precious keepsake left.

Methinks 'twere wise 'mid losses to retain
What's known to hallow and to lighten pain.
The Sacred Volume, in every clime, imparts
The purest opiate to wounded hearts ;
'Twas meant to elevate the rich and great
With prospects fairer than all worldly state ;
And equal promises may well allure
The eager vision of the luckless poor ;
Grateful remembrance of departed friends
To shattered fortune grace and beauty lends ;
For should a higher motive fail t' impress,
Affection's tribute might the bosom bless."

"Well, once like you," the trogger made reply,
"Such views as these (the fact I wont deny),
As themes commended by a sire to son,
My hearty faith and acquiescence won ;
But intercourse with thinkers train'd and free,
Dispell'd belief in your 'Forbidden Tree,'
A tree whose branches and pernicious fruit
The whims of bigots and of knaves may suit ;
May feed the pride of sanctimonious fools,
And win for priests the homage of their tools ;
May 'stablish thrones on abject nations' necks,
With pow'r derived from Churches' stakes and racks ;
Hold out bright promise of a future life
To all that arm for theologic strife ;
Denounce fair Reason (Man's securest guide),
Whene'er to creeds their claims it has denied.

But all these sophistries I now disclaim
 As despot's engine and as bigot's dream ;
 Affectionate memory of my friend that's gone
 I'll cherish ever till my latest sun.
 The Sacred Volume (as you're pleased to style 't)
 My boyhood's fancies for a while beguiled ;
 But as my uncle's *love* I much revere,
 I sold a Book whose stock in trade is 'fear.' ”

“ You seem to revel in the views you hold,”
 Replies his comrade in a style as bold :
 “ The mighty champions of our Church and State
 To you seem pigmies, pithless in debate ;
 The stately staff that props the honest heart
 In your regard is but a poisoned dart ;
 The well of Hope, whence joy to others springs,
 To such as you but noxious potions brings.
 Did Reason measure our accepted creed,
 What we believe were very small indeed !
 The faith that offers us serene repose
 Beyond the bounds of mortal wrecks and woes,
 'Twere reckless folly wholly to displace
 Till faultless Reason proves it false and base.
 Could I persuade you to retract your word
 I'd give you back the Record of the Lord.”

“ Your proffer'd gift permit me to refuse,”
 Replies the sceptic, who the theme pursues :—
 “ No lord above my conscience do I own,
 Nor beg a priest for errors to atone ;

A Pow'r Supreme I solemnly deny,
And think that spirits with their bodies die.
What happens here results, meseems, from chance,
And future scenes are baseless as a trance.
If distant worlds elude our straining gaze,
Shall gloomy graves transmit celestial rays?
If optics ev'n with telescopic aid,
Fatigued and baffled, quit the field survey'd ;
Does reason offer prospect of success
When death's fell pow'rs their blended use suppress ?
Thus all my prospects are exempt from fear,
As all my troubles are extinguished here ;
And if for injuries I feel remorse,
With life's extinction it will cease its force."

"The argument limps," the other quick replies ;
"Your logic's faulty, as your drift's unwise.
If *chance* has placed you *here* without a God,
Then chance may shift you to a new abode.
You spurn the creed that future scenes may rise
Which now elude the sweep of mortal eyes ;
Yet stars and moons by day withhold the light
Which charms our vision through the pall of night ;
So man, mayhap, to darkness must descend
To see new spheres and o'er their wonders bend.
Pure fear's the salt that keeps our souls from taint,
Or melts in sunshine when our hearts repent.
As for remorse—a whip in th' human breast
To scourge the culprit for a vice caress'd—

Divorced from fear—its warnings soon decay,
And rampant sins its early death betray.

“Behold! The watch you’ve placed within my hand
Supplies a moral dolts may comprehend;
Elaborate mechanism its frame contains,
As the heart our feelings, and the head our brains—
The healthy action of the parts and whole
Depends each instant on the spring’s control;
But that same spring its functions lays aside
When outer force has ceased to be applied.
Anon corruption wastes its useless pow’rs,
Which mark decay instead of noting hours.

“’Tis thus our conscience every action shapes,
While every passion its relations keeps;
But when this ‘spring’ shall higher influence spurn
The wheels of duty slumber in their turn.
But other pow’rs, of foul corruption bred,
Invade their sphere and riot in their stead.

“But truce to homilies!” adds the moralist,
“And now let business our discussion sist.
Methinks your watch is just about to stop;—
With your permission I shall wind it up.

“’Tis near the time when night gives place to day,
When honest toppers should their reck’ning pay;
I’m loath to think I should so long remain”—
(But while he spake the watch-spring snapp’d in twain)
“Unlucky accident for one or two!”
“Ay,” quoth the owner, “more for me than you!”

(So Allan spake in Tangytavil bay :

Ill comes, if watch-springs snap at turn of day.)

O'erwhelm'd with terror at his comrade's look,

Who now grew stiff while blood his face forsook,

The would-be buyer calls for quick'ning drink

In case his partner should in stupor sink.

A maiden served them with "the very best,"

Who eyed, much mov'd, the one who seem'd distress'd.

A minute after, when his fit was o'er,

A handsome female gently oped the door :

Forward she stepp'd, as if to ascertain

If he whose state she learn'd was well again.

Her gentle eyes first on the patient fell,

Whose features seem'd to operate like a spell.

One glance at t' other she had time to cast

Ere Reason's light had from her service pass'd.

On empty space she bent a weird stare,

Then drew a sigh, an echo of despair.

Advancing towards him she last perceived

She reached a heart that deep with sorrow heaved.

(Here Caine retired before impending storms,

And cursed the couple in each other's arms.)

TOM WILSON.

WHEN dreams of bliss with sorrow mix
And rule your restless slumber,
The brighter hues you fain would fix,
And these alone remember.

But Memory's an impartial clerk,
That keeps a faithful ledger ;
She won't say white's the same as black,
Though coaxing smiles engage her.

So felt fair Mary of the Drum
When from her swoon she rallied ;
For sad and joyous scenes alike
Upon her vision sallied.

For now she's strong in Wilson's arms,
And happy since he's near her ;
And fain was she to tell her tale
To one who'd fondly hear her.

When gazing in her lover's face
She thought with chilling horror
That Caine was standing at her side
And plotting ruin for her.

She starts abruptly to her feet
To give in charge the felon.

“Well, Caine’s escaped! but vengeance yet
May overtake the villain.”

“Then has the ’scapegrace injured *you*?”
Inquires her angry lover;

“Oh! had I known that wretch was Caine
His day ere now was over.”

“See there! (quoth she) the watch I wore—
The watch your captain sent me;
—A gift the odious caitiff stole
When greater ill he meant me.

“But, darling, I must hence awhile
To nip unripe suspicion;
On my return, to sketch our lives
Shall be our common mission.”

This said, the damsel left the room,
Nor for an answer waited;
And Wilson thought her manner show’d
Devotion had abated.

“All sweetly spoken,” muttered Tom,
“But why the strange addition?
What needs the lassie that is mine
To nip unripe suspicion?”

But when he spent some fruitless thought
On Mary's odd excuses,
He gazed on Caine's now silent watch,
While on his *own* he muses.

MY FIRST WATCH.

FOR ever dear to me that hour
When first a watch I sported ;
No lover more in raptur'd bow'r
Could prize the nymph he courted.

And dear to me that brother, too,
Who parted with the treasure ;
No gift, indeed, full well he knew
Could wake an equal pleasure.

Proud is the soldier on the plain
Who richest trophy clutches ;
Elate with joy the humble swain
Who falls an heir to riches.

But all their spoils and wealth in one,
When by the balance tested,
Seem'd light as air, compar'd to mine
When to my heart I press'd it.

With self-reproach I oft would feign
I fear'd I ceased to mind her ;
A mere pretext—'twas all to gain
A plea *again* to wind her.

The darling gem each night I laid
Beneath my gentle pillow ;
Right o'er the spot I placed my head
Where ticked my plodding fellow.

From underneath I now and then
Would draw her forth with caution
Lest weight or *cold* might check a hand
And stop the organ's motion !

At shortest intervals of time
I on her dial doated ;
Oh ! transport matchless, rich, sublime
When friends my treasure noted !

By other clocks and by the sun
To test her I was ready ;
'Twas not to mark if mine was wrong
But prove if *they* were steady.

The gift of books, or song, or lay
May rapture whiles have given ;
But to be ask'd " the time o' day,"
Methought *resembled heaven !*

I chose the route to mart or fair,
Where *watchless* crowds would meet me
In hopes that sound, *that magic air*,
“Pray, what’s the time?” might greet me.

When my good luck had got abroad
Some brats—you’ll scarce believe me—
Withheld their hand and friendly nod
And vow’d they’d ne’er forgive me.

My teacher’s patience oft I’ve tried,
Who scorned his phrase to soften :
“How *can* you foster childish pride
And show that trash so often ?”

For counsels sage, I must confess,
I fail’d to *seem* his debtor ;
Not that I prized his lectures less,
But liked my ticker better.

Though grieved I lost the love of some
And met the scowl of others,
The scores that *kindly* ask’d the time
Seem’d rooted friends and brothers.

At lonely hour, on moor or fell,
When fear my bosom worried,
Her clinking tick like wizard’s spell
Would lay my troubled spirit.

But Time has worn her tiny springs ;
Her "case" is loose and dusty ;
The little "fly" no longer swings,
And wheels are thin and rusty.

I'm oft advised 'twere better far
For other gear to change her ;
No, no ; remembrance cannot bear,
I'd swop her for a stranger.

Time still drops pleasure from his wing,
And fresher scenes are treasured ;
But no such solace do they bring
As those my time-piece measured.

The broken ring is symbol meet
Of boyhood's transient unions ;
Her very *silence*, lone yet sweet,
Suggests my dead companions !

But why does Mary fail so long
To make her promise true ?
Quickly, she vow'd, she would return ;
—That vow does Mary rue ?

Far otherwise did Fancy paint
This meeting scene for me !
My eyes beheld but glowing tints :
The dark they *would* not see.

Oh ! Mary, did your heart return
The love that swells my breast,
No frigid, calculating mood
Its impulse could resist.

But to your lover's arms you'd rush,
Impatient of delay ;
And in his ear your tale would pour
And list what he would say.

So mutter'd Wilson, lone and dull,
As Mary reappeared,
Whose measured step and distant air
Confirm'd the change he fear'd.

WILSON AND MARY.

“ Now, by the pow'rs of love and truth,”
Exclaims he, with a sigh ;
“ What means my Mary's gripless hand ?
What means th' averted eye ?

“ My fond advance to claim that hand,
Oh ! do not thus repel ;
Nor deem the fault is mine if late
My promise I fulfil.

“ An envious fate and arrant knave
 Thwarted my purpose leal ;
 Yet here at last I hoped to find
 My woes exchanged for weal.

“ If all my other warm appeals
 Your apathy should mock,
 Oh ! list, in fine, while I recall
 Your pledge on West Port rock.”

At mention of the trysting spot,
 “ Forbear the theme,” quoth she ;
 “ I loved you then—I love you still,
But yours I may not be.

“ Withdraw, if Mary still you love,
 And would her peace restore ;
 And let a message show you why
 You may not sue her more.”

With fervent grip she grasp'd his hand,
 Then, sobbing, bade Adieu !
 And ere her accents died away,
 She vanish'd from his view.

This brief and strangely ended scene
 To Wilson look'd a dream,
 Where not one comfort lent a ray
 The darkness to redeem.

His stupor past—he clutched a quill,
 And penn'd his last Address ;
 Then sallying forth this pray'r he sighed :—
 “ My angels Mary bless ! ”

In loving answer to this hint
 —For which she inly pray'd—
 Before her suitor Mary thus
 Her new position laid :—

“ My dearest friend ” (oh ! could I use
 A title dearer still !
 But that I must that bliss forego
 Seems Heaven's sovereign will),

“ Remembrance and affection, too,
 This parting word indite,
 Whence reasons for my altered mood
 You'll reckon to be right :—

“ The Westport rock, where you and I
 Our mutual pledge exchanged,
 Recalls such scenes as reason's sway
 Has almost quite unhinged.

“ I listened to the voice of Caine—
 Your mate in the ‘ Gentoo ’—
 And heard him swear he saw you drown'd,
 And took his oath for true.

“ With magic art the fiend proposed
We should observe the day
That closed the weary annual round
Since you returned to sea.

“ Absorb'd in sorrow o'er your doom,
Upon a ledge I sate ;
Nor knew what time he quit the rock
And left me to my fate.

“ Our house he meanly robb'd of gear ;
(Though long a pampered guest)
The watch he offer'd you for sale
Was stolen with the rest.

“ Unnoted rose the raging tide,
And raved the islet round,
Till, horror-struck and all too late,
I found myself rock-bound !

“ Frantic with terror I beheld
A wild advancing wave,
And, facing seawards, backwards stepp'd,
My threatened life to save.

“ Retreating from the threat'ning surge
I fell into the sea !
The rest is but a blank—until
I rallied on the lea.

“ Beside me stood a sister dear,
And a youth as stiff’s a stone,
Who, struggling to preserve my life,
Had almost lost his own.

“ The rescued and the rescuer
Soon mutual interest shared ;
My grateful words his valour own’d,
And love’s advance prepared.

“ In time, the offer of his hand
My scruples overcame :
For him who snatch’d me from the waves
I spurn’d a rival’s claim.

“ If in your presence I appeared
Oblivious of the past,
My later pledge across my brain
A dreadful cloud had cast.

“ At sight of you my slumbering love
Burst into flame anew,
And to arrest its spreading force
I hurried from your view.

“ Farewell, fair Hope of wedded life
And fellowship with thee !
And should another call thee spouse,
More happy may she be.

The watch your generous skipper once
To me as present gave,
To-morrow (should you prize the gift)
For keepsake you may have.

“ Whene’er you gaze upon its hands,
While moving or at rest,
Recall the signs of Mary’s love,
Though now by fate repress’d.

“ May Heav’n upon your constant heart
Its choicest blessings pour !
Calm be thy life, and blest thy lot,
When time’s brief space is o’er !”

Scarce four and twenty weary hours
Their sluggish course had run,
When Wilson, careworn, doubting, sad,
The Buckhead entrance won.

Desiring audience of the maid,
Who begg’d him to return,
He entered, by request, a room,
Where Mary sat, forlorn.

With stately air, yet sweet withal,
His visit she received ;
But frigid phrases Wilson’s breast
Now more than ever grieved.

Still standing, but about to go,
 Within her hand he placed
A bracelet that for worth and style
 A countess might have graced.

In silent grief the couple stood
 While presents were exchange'd,
When suddenly the maiden's mood
 Seem'd once again estranged.

Her eyes upon the floor she bends,
 Her words are faint and few ;
Nor notes her visitor until
 He sighs his last adieu !

Then gazing towards the open door,
 To snatch a final look,
She sees—and at the sight the maid
 With quick emotion shook—

She sees advancing to the door
 The youth she's pledged to wed,
And fears her interview with Tom
 Some jealousy has bred.

On Wilson vacant, slow and sad,
 Now issuing from the door,
Neil fix'd his eye as if on one
 He doubtless met before.

Then Mary shrieked as Neil advanced
With th' ardour of a Gael,
And raised his arm as if in act
His rival to assail.

While instinct nerv'd the maid's resolve
The foul assault to check,
Perplex'd she sees her Neilie's arms
Flung round his rival's neck.

"To you, to you," the youth exclaims,
While tears stood in his eyes,
"My life I owe,—yet next to Him
Who governs earth and skies.

"Come, Mary, thank the gallant friend
Who, late at Greenock Quay,
Redeem'd me from a watery grave,
And brought me back to thee.

"My reason, Mary, you should share,
For thanks to bounteous Heav'n,
Since Providence, partial to us both,
A common friend has giv'n."

"And this is he," rejoins the maid,
"Who, earlier, won my heart ;
But weighing your surpassing claims
The lovers' bands we part.

“ Oh ! faithful Mary,” answer’d Neil,
“ His claim surpasses mine ;
He earn’d my grateful love till death—
Discharge my debt with thine.”

Welcome to Wilson was the barque
That reached the lonely isle,
Where long a captive’s life he pass’d
Through Caine’s inhuman guile.

Welcome to Mary were the arms
She felt her person lock,
Welcome her rescue from the waves,
And from the Maiden’s rock.

But welcomer still was Neilie’s pledge,
A lover’s rights to waive ;
Now brief and light her trials seem’d
When Heav’n such issue gave.

Tom Wilson, noteful of the guide
That timed his passage home,
Soon join’d his hand, for wedded bless,
With Mary’s of the Drum.

A prosperous uncle soon resign’d
The cares of Buckhead Inn,
And left the Wilsons in his stead
Good will and wealth to win.

RETRIBUTION.

“ Long years have pass’d since then,” quoth Ned,
As here his story ceased.

“ But listen, Rab ; a rumbling noise
My ears assails ;—what is ’t ? ”

Returning from the stackyard fence,
Young Voolin hurried in
With news that changed the current talk,
And woke a various din.

“ My father ’s come,” the youth reports,
“ But not alone he ’s come :
A stranger and his handsome spouse
Have giv’n him escort home.

“ Some luggage ben I have to bring,
A kinsman’s,” father said,
“ The weight is great ; pray, who ’s prepared
To lend me needed aid ? ”

“ Now,” asks the heckler, “ whose may be
The luggage you’d bring ben ?
What gentry folk the honour claim
To have it carried in ? ”

“ They’re gentry folk, indeed,” quoth Rab,
“ But that is all I know :
The husband’s age, within my guess,
Is threescore ten or so.

“ ‘ T. W.’ on a wieldy trunk
Stand out in letters braw ;
The name in full will likely run
Upon a card I saw.”

On this the beggar (who all night
Seem’d noteful of the tale)
Uneasy glances shot at Rab,
As squalls forbode the gale.

No sooner had the packman gone
To lift and carry more,
Than from his couch the mendicant
Roll’d briskly to the floor.

His nose with spectacles bestrid,
He read, with wild surprise,
The full inscription on the card,
While shadows mock’d his eyes,

Thus : “ Mr Wilson, Buckhead Inn,
Argyll Street, Glasg.,” he read ;
Then rushing out, he left at once
The house as well ’s his bed.

“ Why clad so soon ? ” asks Voolin’s son,
“ ’Tis hardly break of day ;
You can’t expect we’ll yoke a horse
To speed you on your way.”

“ Not yet,” replied the wayfarer ;
“ Some better time may suit ;
Now, sleep being gone, just for a change
Thus early I’m afoot.

“ An hour, by favour of the moon,
I’ll dawdle round the farm ;
But should I longer stay abroad,
Don’t feel the least alarm.”

That morn unwonted joy provoked,
’Mong folks in Killocrow,
A din that might at other times
Exceed decorum’s law.

Here Mr Wilson’s health is drunk,
—And all rejoice he’s come ;
Still fuller bumpers prompt hurrahs
For Mary of the Drum.

An hour had pass’d, and so had two,
Yet no one in the hall
Had seen the vagrant beggar’s form,
Or heard his footstep’s fall.

“ It frets my breast,” observes the laird,
“ While th’ inmates of my house
Drink Wilson’s health with loud encore,
And her’s, his sonsie spouse,

“ That one is absent from our midst
Whose presence I should hail ;
Well, see the alms-receiver hoar
You generously regale.”

“ Ah ! well-bethought,” replies his son :
“ I miss him keenly, too ;
His sleep being gone, just for a change
He’d stroll an hour or two.

“ These were his parting words, I trow :—
‘ I’ll dawdle round the farm,
But should I longer stay abroad,
Don’t feel the least alarm.’

“ And now the rhyme usurps mine ear :
I heard it once before,
When friend the heckler sketch’d the wreck
On Tangytavil’s shore.

“ Old Allan’s guest these terms employ’d :
“ I’ll face the sturdy storm,
And should I stay an hour outside,
Don’t feel the least alarm.’

“ Perhaps the miscreant survives
His deed of horrid fame ;
And hovers here, in fond belief
The place forgets his name.

“ Now, who will venture out with me,
This smiling moonlit morn,
To pry along the fisher’s loan,
Or track him to ‘the burn.’

“ On hither side he lingers still
On hillock, crag or moss ;
For Poochcan’s swollen torrent’s ford
He would not—could not cross.”

“ In case your choice you cannot get
For love or show of gold,
I’ll join you in your venturous search,”
Rejoins the pedlar bold.

(No more shall Robert Voolin cheer,
With tale, or song, or smile,
The listening group in spence or hall,
Or weary toil beguile.

Would, Robert, you had reck’d advice
To snatch a brief repose !
But soon, alas ! shall death’s dark stream
Your life ‘mid horrors close !)

The searchers rush'd towards the ford,
And every refuge scann'd,
When lo ! in the middle of the flood
The waif is seen to stand !

The torrent reach'd his shivering knees,
And every minute rose ;
To go, return, or stay—'twere death
The seeming best to choose.

Upon the stone he turn'd half round
To note his foes (or friends?),
When, badly pois'd, his body swerves,
And o'er the billows bends.

“ Now, hold your ground a moment more,”
Cried Rob, the kind and brave—
“ I'll try ”—Too late ! The beggar slipp'd
And sank beneath the wave.

Swift as an arrow from the bow
Macvoolin's noble heir
Sprang out toward the gurgling waif,
Despite the pedlar's pray'r.

Against rude boulders in the stream
With violence both were dash'd ;
And o'er their heads with raving blasts
The tortured surges splash'd.

No shriek for needed aid returns
From water deep or shoal ;
The young and old, the false and true,
The fatal rapids roll !

THE WILD MOURNERS.

Deep were the fears that troubled Killocrow,
When in the pedlar pale despair they saw ;
When questioned where the beggar's footsteps led,
He wildly stared, then shook his drooping head.

“ But where is Robert, if the loon is gone ? ”
Each keenly ask'd, but chief the younger son.
To all the packman still his voice denies ;
His bursting tears alone response supplies.
“ There's something worse, ” exclaim'd M'Voolin's
spouse ;
“ These silent signs my worst suspicions rouse.
Speak, man ! and don't be niggard of your speech :
Let hints no more the truth in driblets teach ! ”

With less emotion, but with grief as keen,
Her husband guesses what his gestures mean.
The carle, impelled by tears of young and old,
From pity yields what sorrow would withhold—

“ The beggar’s drown’d ! I must, with anguish, add,
You’ve lost a son, and we the noblest lad !
I warned the youth (when near the ford we stood)
Against his peril from the fretful flood ;
But mov’d by impulse reckless, if humane,
He fled my grasp and gave his life in vain !”

Loud was the wail that echoed through the hall
Where lately rang huzzas from one and all ;
The boisterous joy’s transmuted into grief—
In tears alone the mourners find relief.
The Wilsons feel a doubly-sharpen’d pang
For quick and dead who late their welcome sang.
Suspicion’s shadow crept along their heart
That in the havoc they had had a part.
Through them, mayhap, the vagrant stole away,
And schemed to lure young Robert for his prey—
A sad return for many a favour shown
By Voolin’s fam’ly and by it alone !

But trebly galling was the heckler’s woe,
Who, more o’erwhelm’d, could scarce his anguish
show ;
His startled brain with raging fever burn’d,
And in his wound he felt the knife was turn’d.
Misgivings rose, relapsed, and rose again,
Lest of his rôle the mourners might complain.
The tale he told (which none, however, check’d)

Might well the wakeful mendicant affect,
Who might be Caine (for aught he heard or knew),
And, self-condemn'd, denote the tale was true.
His ready service in the part he bore,
A sickening aspect to his vision wore.
'Twas thus to him directly all might trace
The swift disaster that beclouds their face.
One only solace soothes his harrow'd breast:—
The part he play'd he acted for the best.

Beside the site where now a bridge and road
Unite—a furlong from MacKeich's abode—
A strolling tramp (he might be reckoned worse)
Descried the young Macvoolin's battered corse ;
From pity or from sordid hopes of gain
He dragg'd the body to the sandy plain ;
Then o'er the corpse he spread an ample plaid,
And look'd around in quest of human aid ;
Nor long did look, for lo ! adown the glen
He notes a troop of slowly pacing men.
With hand and voice he signall'd to the band,
And found them heedful of his soft command.
Endow'd with sore Misfortune's noteful gift,
They soon divined the tramping vagrant's drift.
Onward they press'd, as love or duty urged,
Along the stream, that still with fury surged.
The second son the spot, as foremost, gains,
Where lay, much bruis'd his brother's cold remains.

Upon the view a sudden frantic fit
Appeared to stun his senses and his wit ;
The air he rent with one wild piercing scream,
And rush'd, a maniac, towards the roaring stream.
Deftly the heckler, goaded by alarm,
Arrests the youth and firmly grips his arm :
A triple force the madden'd boy display'd,
And forced the rest to join their needed aid.
Savage reproaches, join'd to reckless blows,
He hurls at all who dare his will oppose ;
And wildly asks why won't they let him die,
And in one tomb along with Robert lie ?

The dead and living slowly some remove,
And homewards trend along the hazel grove ;
While others stay to seek on bank and pool
Whom yet they reckoned more a knave than fool.

The tramp (or tinker) in a pensive mood,
With seeming interest all their movements view'd ;
His careless questions scant regard engage,
He neither ask'd nor heard the beggar's age ;
Content, apparently, to know no more,
He bent his footsteps towards the northern shore.

But Ruary spied a casket 'neath his arm,
Whereof he thought he formerly saw the form.
In his conjecture, Caine the casket bore
That morn he met him at old Allan's store.

But now, at length, the beggar's corpse is found,
And rocks and gullies with the news resound;
To new excitement Ruary's pow'rs attend,
And brief reflections on the casket end.

Long angry blasts swept corrie, glen, and scaur,
That day when neighbours, friends, and folk from far
Met to convey to sunny, lone Killean,
The torn, disfigured corses of th' ill-fated men.
Never before or since did Killocrow
Such motley classes to her precincts draw :
Here masters, servants, hinds, and shepherds grey,
To fellow mortals sorrow's tribute pay.

The different age and eke the different rank
Of those who 'neath th' o'erwhelming current sank,
Suggested feelings cognate to the case
Till feuds disturbed the solemn sway of Peace ;
Old mourners claim for th' elder of the two
Precedence in the cortege as his due.
'Tis meet, they said, that age, however poor,
On life's last journey first should leave the door.

The young or rich this specious plea resist,
And point to merit as the guiding test ;
Foul shame, indeed, this party loud averr'd,
If beggars should to farmers be preferr'd ;
And should not he who gave his latest breath
To snatch a felon from deserved death,

Receive the honours due to true and brave,
And yield in none to him who proved a knave ?

The wordy warfare ripened into brawls,
And each on other for assistance calls.
The younger mourners, active, swift, and keen,
Were first to move and hurry to the glen.
A stiff mishap arrests them at the burn,
Whose threat'ning flood their passage seemed to spurn.
The unforeseen event detains them at its marge
Until their rivals cleared th' adjacent gorge.

And now, when peace and concord should combine
To yield a point beyond ev'n reason's line,
The partisans discuss their rights anew,
Till loud remonstrance into menace grew.
The old competitors with force declare
Disputed honours here both now must share :
If th' other men precedence first have snatch'd,
By fair award the privilege must be match'd.
And thus, in justice, and unaw'd by spite,
The first to cross the ford they claim as right.

None yielding, both omit the solemn rites,
And, turning pugilists, engaged in fights.
O grave Humanity ! thine eyelids seal,
While funeral factions mutual hate reveal !
For, deaf to reason and to honour blind,
Thy gentle laws they scatter to the wind !

Around the bier where brother-men repose,
With fellow-mourners comrades bandy blows !
The ploughman turns new sods on blood-stained soils,
And verdant spots of native hues despoils.
Keen masters spurn th' advice themselves have given,
To foster love, best law of earth and heav'n.
The brawling burn now swifter seems to run,
A din much hoarser than its own to shun.
The stream increases by new rivers fed,
And blends its colour with a warmer red.
On sable garments and on snowy shirts
A lusty jet each purple fissure squirts.
The gory ground suggests a two-fold bed,
A lair indeed for living and for dead.

While mutual havoc thus the ford disgraced,
The Parish Pastor rode to view in haste.
(A wanton obstacle had checked his speed,
And caused his absence at the time agreed.)
Sincere apologies for being late
The pious shepherd was prepared to state,
When, horror-struck, he saw the deadly fray,
And straight began for heaven's grace to pray.
At sight of one whose office heralds peace
The fierce antagonists their quarrel cease.
Reining his steed he lifts his hand on high,
And hurls reproach, but deprecates reply.
Bleeding and bruised they list, with downcast look,
Their preacher's voice, while thus he plied rebuke :

(A battered straggler by the water side
The cause of tumult to the priest supplied.)
The silent, fervent, hurried pray'r being o'er,
He plied his gifts peace, banish'd, to restore :—
“ Insensate fools ! why holy rites befoul,
And taint your body as you taint your soul ?
Much do I grieve that hence I tarried long :
My presence here had checked the rabid throng.

“ Ye aged fiends, can't warnings lately sent
Wake meditation on your days misspent ?
Can holiest duties that can man engage
Consist with slaughter and unbridled rage ?
Becomes it those whose days are near a close,
To scout reflection and its blessings lose ?
Is 't thus you set example to the young,
Belied by deeds, but native to the tongue ?
How could your hands with blood the face besmear,
Where sorrow's pangs should lead the trickling tear ?
How would it seem if others seared as you,
Around your bier should mar the honours due ?
The beggar's fate might well your hearts impress,
And root reflexion in their hard recess.

“ Ye youthful vipers, reft of sense and wit,
Why thus so early spiteful venom spit.
For trifling whims, impulsive, you contend
In feuds that must, at best, ignobly end.

A worthier cause for valour and for skill
Select betimes, and prop it with a will.
Instruct in patience th' old but foolish head,
As fruits o'er stems a grateful fragrance shed.
The youthful scion who so nobly fell,
Whose worth you knew and whom you loved so well,
Would scorn the wreath you offer his remains,
When soil'd with mud and tinged with bloody stains.
The memory of his death so premature
Should surely longer than a week endure.
If texts like that affect nor head nor heart,
What moral boon can priest or church impart?
A passion vile, and but an hour begun,
Has years of sermons and of tracts undone.
I fain could wish my eyes had closed for aye
Ere they had witnessed this atrocious fray.
What fruit can spring from years that must be few,
Since forty summers could so little do?
My fear awakes lest others be as hard,
Who quite as long have listened to "the word."
If those who seem'd at least impress'd by death
Float mere professions on a vapoury breath,
Is't wise to cherish better thoughts of some
Who, shunning sorrow's show, remain'd at home?
There needed not, in sooth, such odious brawl
Malign attention to our shores to call ;
To teach anew all lips to quote with scorn
The rebels' ambush for Inspector Sterne ;

To harrow feelings and to bare the sore
Of scars endured on Tangytavil shore.
'Twas yours to help these memories to fade,
And sink, unmentioned, in oblivion's shade,
By lives contrasted with those lives of yore
Our land's good name and comfort to restore.
Had I gone down to death's dark cave forlorn
Ere many of you had as yet been born,
My fondest prospects had been more assured—
My parting pangs with firmer hope endured.
A dark suspicion would not anyhow
Disturb my bosom or o'er cast my brow,
That from some motive quite as cross and vain
You'd mock my shade above or 'neath the plain ;
That mischief following close on my decease
Would blur the triumphs of my day of grace.
And why should all, or why should even one
(Should I survive you in life's fitful run),
Do ought to lessen or, perhaps, destroy
The zeal wherewith such terms I'd fain employ,
As pastors quote in firm or hopeful mood
O'er hearers summon'd to their last abode?
'Tis not your right to hope that pastors true,
To soothe your friends, should lie to Heav'n and
you.

Stiff neckèd race ! (I speak to young and old)
If thus it lists you to be stern and bold,

'Gainst subtler pow'rs proclaim incessant war,
And be your emblem Bethlehem's orient Star.
With this device upon your banners blue,
Follow a Captain ready, tried, and true.
Against the world, the Devil, and the flesh,
Do ceaseless battle and begin afresh.
Let older men their peevish whims abjure
Lest sudden follies better traits obscure.
To wisdom's path th' inquiring novice guide,
And set examples of a nobler pride.

“ And you, young men, the fire of youth restrain,
Lest wilder vigour it may yet attain.
The breast that fires at whims we scarcely blame
Needs little fuel to increase the flame.
Early conform to models Heav'n ordain'd :
For years confirm the mood in which we're trained.

“ Now, when these solemn rites, so rudely maim'd
By orgies dire and scarcely to be named,
Find due completion ere the day is spent,
And every mourner hies him to his tent ;
Resolve, in token you've renounced your hate,
Your ruthless vengeance and insane debate,
To build with solemn and masonic law,
'Twixt ancient Poochican and Killocrow,
A bridge of stone to span the fatal burn,
That North and South may friendly ' calls ' return.

“ My blessing (Heav'n confirm my fervent pray'r !)
 Rest on you all, my flock and constant care ;
 Depart in peace, and fall not out by th' way ;
 Improve the sequel and redeem the day.
 Averse to state whose plea 's the best or worst,
 I bid the juniors cross the streamlet first.”

THE WRECKER'S LETTER.

THE pastor left the funeral train
 For other cleric work,
 And turned aside, observed by few,
 To Ballochantee Kirk.

Leaning against the whitewashed wall,
 And seated on a stone
 (One of the steps of th' outside stair)
 Begrimed with dust, alone,

A stranger (tramp he might be styled),
 Or one of the tinker race,
 Confronts his view, but, starting up,
 Made show to change his place.

“ There 's no occasion,” quoth the priest,
 “ To rise or quit the stair ;
 There's room enough to pass you by,
 And still some space to spare.

“ Your state denotes you’ve travell’d far
—Perhaps you’ve fasted, too ;
If so, my hearers here the part
Of generous hosts will do.”

“ Thanks for your offer, kindly priest,
For generous hosts are scant ;
But charity’s bounty *now* at least
I neither need nor want.

“ My humble trade, I’m glad, secures
An independent life ;
My ample means I’ve not to share
With either bairn or wife.

“ Within this village I had hoped
To find a stranger’s ‘ rest ;’
But here’s nor licensed howff nor inn
For either man or beast.”

“ True,” quoth the incumbent, “ there is none
Within a fair half-mile ;
But for a change a better seat
Would ease you after toil.

“ Your accent leads me to remark
Argyllshire’s not your home ;
Fain would I learn what news you bring,
And whence you’ve lately come.

“Let us withdraw to neighbour Kay’s,
—I see him at his door—
There you’ll take rest till I return
From visits ’mong the poor.”

These visits o’er, the priest rejoins
The swarthy tramp at Kay’s ;
Then sitting down a pocket book
Upon the table lays.

Some notes and letters on the board
He spread with careless hand :
Then from the group selected one
He fail’d to comprehend.

Then poring o’er the letters’ signs,
He asks, in heedless tone,
If the stranger chanced to speak or know
Tongues other than his own.

“ A neighbouring farmer placed, to-day,
This billet in my hand :
But, though some ancient tongues I know,
This can’t I understand.

“ Amid the relics of a waif
—A beggar lately drown’d,
In course of search to trace his name,
This document was found.”

One moment sway'd by cautious fear,
The next by daring pride,
The tramp assumed a trustful mood,
And flung reserve aside :

“ I've been abroad a year or two
—My colour that may tell—
And though no linguist in a sense,
I've mastered Spanish well.

“ But scarcely possible, I ween,
That my linguistic skill
Can now avail me to translate
The beggar's tale or will.”

Then half in doubt, and half in jest,
The minister passed the note,
And keenly watch'd the traveller's face,
His current mood to quote.

You've seen the moon's pale sickly sheen
The cloud's swart colour chase,
Till of its floating dusky hue
You scarce a streak could trace :

You've seen the strange chameleon
When roused with sudden spite
Renounce its green, and blue, and jet,
And don a spotless white.

So changed the tramp's complexion when
The signature he scann'd ;
His body trembled while the note
Slipp'd from his pithless hand.

But soon regaining partial strength
He staggered to the door,
Then backward stepped to lift the note
That dropped upon the floor.

The pastor snatch'd it from his grasp
With keen yet tender look,
Not knowing which the tramp deserved,
His pity or rebuke.

Withholding th' explanations now
Which priest and neighbour crave,
With quick impatient step the tramp
Directly seeks "the cave."

(The ancient cave anent the Kirk,
O'erarch'd with reddish stone,
Whose dripping ceiling water yields
When elsewhere there is none.

Dear grotto ! Summer's cool retreat,
And scene of youth's brief joys ;
How often have I tired thy eaves
With feats of tuneless noise !)

Emerging from its cool recess
With a casket somewhat soil'd,
He spurned all converse long or short
With woman, man, or child.

With quick'ning pace he reach'd the Inn
—The "big House" of Drumore,
Whence, on the right, he pass'd "the brow,"
And cross'd Coliska moor.

Homewards the parish pastor stroll'd,
Deep musing on the scene
He lately saw, and struggled hard
Its secret drift to glean.

Some mourners now were leaving th' Inn,
And seeking their abode :
A few maintained a steady gait ;
More staggered on the road

In front of th' Inn the pastor meets
Macvoolin and a friend ;
Their greeting o'er, with one consent
Into the howff they wend.

'Mid various talk, Macvoolin asks
What that same letter meant
Which he submitted to the priest,
And for perusal lent.

Right modestly the priest replies :—

“ The task exceeds my pow'r :
My list of studies knoweth not
The Spanish tongue and lore.”

His interview beside the Kirk
With th' olive-colour'd caird
He told ; while Wilson's sunk in reverie,
And wonder wrapt the laird.

“ You move surprise, my worthy host ”
(’Twas thus Tom Wilson spoke),
“ That my experience abroad
You strangely overlook.

“ The Spanish tongue was th' only speech
For years I daily used ;
'Tis long ago ! Your oversight
May justly be excused.

“ But had the letter met my eyes
The minute when 'twas found :
I'd weave, perhaps, a web wherein
The spider might be wound.”

Meanwhile the tender eye of grief
For recent loss sustain'd,
On small writ lines can scarcely brook
To have its vision strain'd.

“ May ’t please you, pastor, ere I go,
To visit Killocrow,
Where this same note I’ll strive to con
By Grammar’s light and law.”

“ A fortnight hence, let me observe,”
Quoth Voolin in his turn,
“ We may inaugurate the bridge
Across the fatal burn :

“ Be that occasion duly seized
To serve a double end :
The priest will bless the finish’d work,
And hear my ‘ learned friend.’ ”

Agreed : the pastor hands the scroll
To Voolin’s agèd guest,
While full approval of the plan
In chorus all attest.

To promise true the genial priest
The family circle joins,
To hear the sailor, versed in tongues,
Translate the beggar’s lines.

Surprise with horror and dismay
The group’s attention feeds,
The while the purport of the scroll
The rescued linguist reads :—

“Your luckless ventures, son, affect me much ;
Still more your spouse's whims my feelings touch.
With Bell of Ballevain your loss you'd mend,
And Fortune's frowns might yet in favours end.
Like me, perhaps, in scheming you excel,
Which melts in air although it promised well.
Misfortune lures me to a hopeful scheme,
But stints my profits to a vacant dream.
Malignant, perverse, strange fatality,
Or higher pow'r (if higher power there be),
One season smiles upon my well-laid plans,
The next, to ruin all my skill trepans ;
Till now on life's last verge I barely own
A scrimp return for what my hand has sown.

“Fatigued with failures I have come again
To seek the casket hid in Paisley Glen.
Its legend may a lucky sequel show :—
‘Who owns the casket want shall never know.’
The leathern bag (of which you've been informed)
I fail'd to find, and hurried off alarmed.

“Alas ! alarms have often chill'd my breast,
Turn'd day to night—then scared my night's brief rest.
In fine, I beg your promise you'll fulfil,
To meet me at th' appointed ‘Poochan well.’
Till fate arrests the currents of my veins
Eniac. J. your loving sire remains.”

“ Eniac J.,” quoth Wilson at the close,
“ Revers’d, J. Caine, the name and surname shows.
Renounce your faith, deluded seed of Caine,
That with the casket real good you’ll gain.
That casket once was mine until that year
Caine play’d the traitor in Chili and here.
A Spaniard pressed me to accept the boon
As partial payment for a service done.
Its generous legend casually I observed,
And own’d it promised more than I deserved.
‘ Who owns the casket want shall never know,’
Such was its motto graven in a row.
‘ What shall,’ quoth I, ‘ the owner never want?’
The Spaniard vow’d—‘ He’ll ne’er a *casket* want !’ ”

Now who can tell with truth and will,
Like Bannatyne of High Barnhill,
Of Torquil, farmer, laird, and friend
To all from Tarbert to Southend?
The sweetly-smiling kindly man
Thus o’er a favourite topic ran :—

TORQUIL.

LAIRD TORQUIL'S will was parish law
From Barr to Kilmahoe ;
Who did him service very soon
To fame was sure to grow.

His ploughmen turned the cleanest rigs
On stubble land or lea ;
At every " Show " his horse or bull
Unchallenged bore the gree.

He tossed the bar or heaved the stone
An ell or two at least
Beyond all rivals in the Shire,
From North, South, West, or East.

Who could like Torquil thread the maze
Of jig, strathspey, or reel ;
Or balance the fantastic toe
Against the steady heel ?

Who challenged Torquil in the ring
To test his might and main,
Was never heard to breathe a wish
To feel his grip again.

On Ballochantee's slobby shore,
Or Pans' wide stretching green,
At shinty play on any day
His match was never seen.

On choosing "sides" his ashen club
Was match'd against a pair ;
His fly-lick stroke from dale to dale
Left little space to spare.

At Fairs he's first, for friendship's cup,
To clink the shilling down ;
He's first to fill his crony's quaich,
And last to charge his own.

No sturdier flank e'er propp'd a wight
Of thrawn, unequal gait ;
No steadier hand a toper steer'd
However far or late.

To build a cot for th' old or poor
He lent the amplest help :
His men and carts, unask'd, were sent
To drive their peats or kelp.

Ne'er stung he neighbours with a jibe,
Or dealt th' aggressive blow ;
Yet comrades found his arm a shield
Against the bragging foe.

With Torquil's ways, and Torquil's views,
The Parish was content ;
The priest might risk to change its creed
If Torquil bowed assent.

If rent from cotter in a strait
The farmer fail'd to get,
He never dunn'd them for the score
—He scarcely deem'd it debt.

Though many a caird from far or near,
By night as well 's by day,
Paid keen attention to his stacks
Of peats, or pease, or hay ;

Yet Torquil, though he saw the raid,
Scarce thought the stacks were his ;
Or if he mark'd the "set" at all,
'Twas not to ban but bless!

Though guileless as a new-born babe,
In conscious virtue bold,
He blush'd—but not for self—when tongues
The faults of others told.

Yet he whose manly generous warmth
The rich and needy prove,
Now smarts with anguish from the chill
Of interrupted love.

Than all the lasses of Kintyre,
On hill, or dale, or plain,
The nearest to his bosom's core
Was Bell of Ballevain.

She loved in turn ; for none besides
Did the maiden live or care ;
The day was fixed when Bella vow'd
That Torquil's lot she 'd share.

A trip to Glasgow, ere the day,
Th' appointed bridal morn,
Was urged by friends, who press'd the maid
The rustic laird to spurn.

Hemm'd in by watchful kith and kin,
A month from home she spent ;
And to a flattering rival's hand
She sigh'd a forced assent.

But countering tricks of skilful play,
With still a stronger card,
The maiden flees St Mungo's bounds,
And dupes her wily guard.

With joy unmix'd her kinsfolk learn
On better fate she fell :
The "rival" prov'd a worthless sham,
Who 'scaped a prison cell !

Torquil, assured his darling's heart
 'Mid every change was true,
Was prompt to give her welcome back,
 And marriage pledge renew.

With willing, fond, yet grave consent
 The bridal day was named ;
Within the ancient fane at Cleat
 The banns were thrice proclaim'd.

To join two rites, the Parish vow'd
 To cope the " union " bridge
The day that Torquil and his bride
 Fulfilled their nuptial pledge.

From every farm and every hut,
 For miles, from north and south,
The people throng'd to place a stone
 To help the bridge's growth.

All voted that the helpful laird
 Two tablet stones should set,
In solemn pomp before the crowd,
 In either parapet.

Th' appointed day—the long'd-for day
 Of joy and temper'd mirth—
Arose propitious : Heav'n's bright orb
 Shed smiling beams on earth.

At noon a multitude possess'd
The bank on either side ;
Not more to scan the tiny bridge
Than see the winsome bride.

The pair espous'd select a spot
On either side the stream,
Whence, aided, both could join their hands,
And courtship's troth redeem.

At given sign they lave their hands,
Then joined them o'er the flood,
While music rose from waterfalls
And warblers of the wood.

With more than customary zeal
The pastor sealed their bond ;
His prayers for their future weal
The gathering echoed round.

"Born," adds the priest, "on north or south
Of this now mystic stream,
May this your bond your people bind
In deed, as well 's in name."

The happy pair then mount the bridge,
And on its centre stand,
Till Torquil should the tablets fix
With mason-guided hand.

A legend on one slab is cut
At liberal Torquil's cost ;
But in return the donor's name
A niche therein may boast.

The stones being set, the pastor pray'd :—

“ Be this memorial
A symbol of good faith and love
’Twixt rich, poor, great, and small.

“ Let all who, crushed by loss or crime,
Shall press on either stone,
Here cease to bear remorse or care,
Or Fortune's frown bemoan.

“ If feuds with neighbours or with kin
Have marr'd their bosom's peace,
Here may they catch the social flame,
And surly rancour cease.”

A deep “ Amen ” from sturdy throats
Concludes th' impressive rites ;
Then motley crowds disperse for home
—To glens or moorland heights.

And Killocrow's subdued abode
Receives its tenants, too ;
With Thomas Wilson of the Barns,
And Kaye of Molochdoo.

Thus Bannatyne his chapter traced,
And with a draught his spirits braced.
Anon he summons neighbour Kerr,
Of legend-lore to give his share ;
For Kerr of Paisley Farm was strong
In legends varied—brief or long—
Traditions doled from sire to son
Within his family long had run ;
With greedy ear he caught the strain,
And loved to tell them o'er again.
Some local themes of various dates
The Paisley Tenant thus relates :—

THE SMUGGLERS' VAULT.

A SCORE of years—be 't less or more—
Had run their chequered course
Since Caine at Paisley disappeared
“ For better or for worse,”

When one sweet eve, as Arran's peaks
Reflect the sun's soft rays,
A yawl in snug Lochranza bay
Her tiny anchor weighs.

Across for Saddell bay she steers
With a fresh and rising breeze ;
And thus the craft, on nearing home,
Shipp'd several drenching seas.

Arrived at length, and soak'd with spray,
Right fain to reach the land,
One passenger, robust and lithe,
Sprang forth upon the sand.

He seems in years beyond his prime,
But not impair'd by years ;
The rarest sprinkling of grey hairs
In tresses blond appears.

He walk'd, impatient, from the beach
Toward the ancient Inn :
Yet entered not its cosy bield,
But pass'd, and sought the " Glen."

The Antiquary's tame pursuits
Lay little in his way ;
Else, here o'er relics he had spent
A more than common day.

Here sculptured emblematic slabs
On chieftains' tombs repose,
Whose records, graved in graphic signs,
Old Highland traits disclose.

Here Somerled of ancient fame
Has found his resting-place,
Though monarch of the Western Isles,
And foremost of his race.

Half-way across the rugged moors
That stretch from sea to sea,
At midnight here a man he sees,
Where none he thought should be.

Then both, for reasons not avow'd,
But doubtless may be guess'd,
Took flight to shun the fiend unknown,
And conscious faults confess'd.

A furlong had the traveller cleared
O'er brackens stiff and burned,
When from the yielding ground beneath
A hollow clang return'd.

A double terror thus assail'd
What pluck he still retained ;
And, finding motion led to scrapes,
Awhile he there remain'd.

Some minutes held him, racked with doubt,
Upon the blasted heath :
'Twas hard to choose 'twixt fiends above
And ogres hid beneath.

But "private reasons" urged the plea
'Twas wiser now to go,
As moving forms were more to dread
Than *clanging* elves below.

Onward he crept on all his fours,
Four yards or maybe five,
When suddenly the earth gave way,
And buried him alive !

The rumbling din had scarcely ceased
When accents hoarse were heard :—
“ The demon that has sent you here,
Here gives you your reward ! ”

A struggle to escape the doom
These awful terms convey'd,
Served but to plunge him deeper still
In depths of turf and shade.

Descending sheer through twigs and clods
That form'd the fragile door,
He forced the ceiling of a hut,
And bump'd upon the floor.

Chill horror froze his bones and brain
—Forerunner of his doom—
When Fancy conjures up the thought
He sinks in rayless gloom !

But darkness he might well prefer
To the nether lurid light,
Whose service dimly set in view
A hairy half-clad wight !

From th' opposite corner of the "toor" *

This type of savage life
Advances, halts, then, wildly fierce,
Unsheathes a burnish'd knife!

With counter pluck the traveller
Display'd a weapon, too ;
A handy pistol from his breast
With equal haste he drew.

The blade and trigger "lie in rest,"
An instant death to deal ;
When scowling on his fancied foe
Outspake the moorland chiel :—

" My curse upon that faithless ' guard '
I sent to watch the lea ;
That fate were better thrust on him
That's now prepared for thee.

" For a pistol in a trembling hand
In aim is won't to fail ;
But see this point ! 'Tis sharp and stout
To pierce a coat of mail.

" Yet heart I've not, within this hut,
To sned your thread of life,
For though I am a smuggler bred,
I'm not a man of strife."

* Vault.

“ And I believe in you as *man*
A like forbearance lies ;
The rigour you assert you show
As servant of th’ Excise.

“ Let ’s part in peace ; your life I’ll spare—
You’re free to go away,
On this condition that you’ll swear
This ‘ toor ’ you’ll not betray.

“ If after this unbought release
You do me wrong or skaith,
There ’s not a man that bears my name
That won’t design your death.”

Down fell their fury with these words
—Their weapons dropped as well,
And startled Peace her pinions press’d,
And lingered in the cell.

“ ’Tis ignorance befools our minds,”
The traveller observes,
As now he joins to mental calm
New vigour in his nerves.

“ Your first and wild intent,” quoth he,
“ To stain your trenchant blade,
Provokes less wonder than the ruth
That now forgives my raid.

“ And, now at once to end the fears
Your *trade*, I see, creates,
I'll draw aside the veil that hides
How one his fellow hates.

“ I'm no Exciseman !” Hereupon
The maltster shored his flask,
Well filled with “browst ” as keen as e'er,
Had guggled from a cask.

“ You're no Exciseman ! That's enough,”
Quoth Callum of the Glen ;
“ Ye noo may be Auld Nick himsel'
For ocht I care or ken.

“ Come, gie 's your han', and sit ye doon,
And let us hear your crack ;
For, saving this bit toil in maut,
O' wark I'm unco slack.

“ Though wha ye are and whence ye cam
I winna rudely spier,
Yet, gin ye hae a mind to tell,
I'll no objek to hear.”

“ Not much of business have I,”
(So answer'd Callum's guest :)
“ Scarce more than whims have drawn me on
To stride your moorland's crest.

“ My backward route to Saddell Glen
I just had turned to trace,
When lo ! a *figure* started up,
And peer'd into my face.

“ Disdaining converse with the loon
I changed my course a bit,
And here I am, to find your howff
Requires a little wit.

“ But, by the by, what lurking cause
Could that strange ring produce
That answered to my bounding spring
On rubbish soft and loose?

“ 'Tis but a little space from hence,
And eastward on the lea ;
Had I some leisure at the time
The cause I'd try to see.”

“ 'Tis ignorance disturbs our mind,”
Quotes Callum to his guest :
“ The sound came from a Whisky still
Now gone to rust and rest.

“ Confounded be that imp you met
Upon the upland stretch ;
I'll turn a gimlet in his lug
When next he 's 'neath my thatch.

“ My orders to conceal that “ still ”
In some far distant bog,
From your remark I learn have been
Neglected by the dog.

“ But hark ! Is that his well-known tread
Upon the moss-clad stone ?
My signal, if he's near at hand,
Will bring him here anon.”

He whistled shrill, and, quick as sound,
There entered from the roof,
A frame which, free to join the pair,
Kept for a while aloof.

The meagre phantom seem'd t' abjure
Fowl, mutton, beef, and fish,
And sworn, in penance for his “ trade,”
To mortify the flesh.

Then by and by he nearer drew,
And caught (from will or chance)
Of the stranger's form and size and face
A shrewd but hasty glance.

“ A better guard you'd better keep,”
Said Callum of the Glen ;
In future don't be caught asleep :
You hear, my bonnie man ?

“ I hope you went to Carradale,
And bargained wi' oor frien' :
If so, prepare the kegs and jars
Against to-morrow's e'en.

“ What news are going in the bay
That 's worth to tell or hear?
Hast heard about the new-made still,
Or latest price of beare? ”

“ No muckle news about the bay,
Least-ways there 's nane o' wecht,
The Whusky stull will no be hame
Tull, aiblins, Fooraday nicht.

“ That very nicht a sturdy band
Wull bring 't to Paisley ' brig,'
And gin th' Excise oppose, they'll die
Rather than quarter beg.

“ The gaugers search a' pits an' holes
For something they hae smelt,
But if they grup wi' smuggler chaps,
A hantle maun be kill't.

“ They tell me, too, a stranger chap
Frae Arran Isle has come,
A son of Caine, who foully wrong'd
Fair Mary of the Drum.”

This said, gaunt Ruary turn'd away,
And ceas'd a courier's task.
The stranger, restless, somewhat pale,
Begg'd Callum's bracing flask!

The "figure," whom his master dubb'd
A harum-scarum dolt,
Stalk'd back again and flung him down
Upon the levell'd malt.

And, for a pillow, both his hands
He placed beneath his head,
Then feigned to close his ears and eyes
To what was done or said.

"Now," quoth the alien, "since our friend
Seems overcome with sleep,
"Why trust your safety thus to one
Who can't a secret keep?"

"That I am not a gauger, how
Should this dull fellow know?
For aught he knows, his talk of "stills"
In me might wake a foe!

"Such want of caution, I suppose,
One may to this ascribe
That you, the smugglers, seldom see
This hated gauger tribe.

“ Yet though much fewer risks you run
In this unlawful trade,
Better than join 't, by burning kelp
I'd earn my daily bread.

“ Ev'n though a pittance fair you gain,
'Tis gained at heavy cost :
By lawless traffic, great or small,
Your sense of virtue's lost.

“ The debt you owe your neighbours near
The poorest of you own ;
While Conscience lets the man of wealth
Withhold it from the Throne.

“ Through youth and manhood, ay, to age,
Your morals bear a taint ;
Ev'n when your priests are heard to scold
Rebuke is rarely meant.

“ The State must soon to ruin run
If subjects scorn her laws ;
She thrives to-day, for patriot men
Befriend her righteous cause.

“ How can a people, lax and lost
In merchandise like this,
Have right to rank in Honour's clan
Or taste of Virtue's bliss? ”

So ends the traveller's stilted theme,
But ends without applause ;
Of th' audience one seem'd fast asleep,
The other bann'd his "laws."

The maltster's matted, shaggy locks
Stood stiff as heather stems ;
And swearing by a smuggler's gods,
He thus, in turn, declaims :—

"Your preach, my man, is very goot,
—Your practice I don't know ;
But, by my sang, you better quat
Than ruffle Callum Gow.

"Ye've just hae preach'd about the Throne,
And what the Throne should get ;
I'm thinkin' that through you and more
The Throne's owre fat a pet.

"The Throne's nae better than it's ca'd,
By a' its mongrel friends ;
It scrapes its gear wi' greedy han's,
And cares na for the means.

"The Parliament chaps that maks the laws
For a' folks but themsels,
Are just but smugglers in disguise,
Withoot the cost o' "Stills."

“ They eke a kingdom here and there,
To many grabb'd before,
And smuggle treaties with their kings,
With speech in cannon's roar.

“ If what *we* do offends a law,
They smash a law as weel ;
But wi' this difference that they sin
Upon a lairger scale.

“ We're chairg'd for a' we buy and eat,
We're chairg'd for what we *do* ;
And ay the mair we toil and sweat,
The mair ye say we're due.

“ What richt hae lairds or lords to know
What money smugglers mak ?
Why don't they tax the Farmers, too,
For every cheese and stack ?

“ The smuggling chaps are just as gude
As any folk ye'll name ;
The Clergy never fashes *us*—
We seldom trouble *them*.

“ To rob a foreigner o' his ain
Is meanness in th' extreme ;
To keep frae countrymen oor ain
Not e'en a saint could blame.

“Ye’ve seen the warst that’s kent o’ *me*,
 —Nane here kens ocht o’ *you* ;
 Perhaps the folk that ken you best
 Condemn *your* traffic too.

“The loodest-tongued in virtue’s praise
 Whiles wound her honour most ;
 On th’ other han’ her honest sons
 Despise the spouter’s boast.

“There’s many a wark much waur than oors,
 If putten to the test ;”

“O ! ay,” quoth Ruary, ’twixt his snores,
 —“A *Wrecker’s* ’mang the rest.”

“Don’t mind the chiel,” quoth Callum Gow,
 He’s dreaming o’ a ‘wreck’
 That happened doon near Paisley shore
 Twa scores o’ summers back.”

Swift as a weasel flees its foe
 And quits the threshing floor,
 The stranger sprang from ground to roof,
 And vanish’d in the moor.

“Stop ! wrecker’s spawn,” roar’d Ruary Ard,
 “The flask you’ve ta’en restore us.
 Ye nicht at least before ye gae’d
 Hae tasted ‘Deoch an doras.’” *

* The stirrup-cup.

“ His manner’s saucy, Ruary, lad,
I, Callum, must admit ;
Ken ye the chiel ye wrecker ca’d,
And gar’d so fast to flit ? ”

“ A bow at venture I have drawn,
And hit the mark, I trow ;
Richt through the harness sped the dart :
What think ye, Callum Gow ? ”

“ He’s come, I guess, to seek the bag
Once hid in Paisley Glen ;
But I could tell him, had he ax’d,
’Twere best were ’t taken then.

“ On southern brink o’ yon grim glen
There juts a tapering rock ;
Frae Paisley shore by a’ the warl’
It’s like an anvil’s block.

“ Ae day my uncle rode its peak,
And, turning back, he see’d
A leather strap below its root
From cover partly freed.

“ That bag, which once his father stole
From Tangytavil’s beach,
My uncle drew from holes as deep
As far’s his hand could reach.”

“ What did he wi' it, Ruary, frien' ?
Was't keepit for himsel' ? ”

“ Na, na, he gaed to Campbelton
To gar them ring the ' bell. ’

“ But some ane said the Custom Hoose
Aye claims what comes ashore ;
Sae, to the offisher he gangs,
Wha straight the wallet tore.

“ But what was in 't I never heerd ;
Yet some offishal said :
' This day next week, my man, come back,
Ye'll find your service weigh'd. ’

“ He gaed fu' gleg, ye may be sure,
And gat a bonnie sum ;
A share, I'm told, was sent abroad
To Mary o' the Drum. ”

“ Ah ! Ruary, ” chuckled Callum Gow,
When Ruary's screed was done ;
“ Noo, had oor guest the wallet fand,
Wad he gie it to the Throne ? ”

“ To-morrow nicht, ” quoth Callum's jo,
I'll skulk in Paisley Glen ;
I'm sure to meet the scoondrel there,
Or track him if I can. ”

PAISLEY BRIG.

THE hour past gloaming's sober hue
Had run its midway course,
When Sterne, Inspector of Excise,
Dismounted from his horse.

A stranger prowling near the shore
Had hinted to his men,
A smuggling corps that very night
Would muster in the glen.

'Twas near the narrow ancient bridge
Due north from Paisley Farm,
Where smugglers used to watch their foe,
And sound the due alarm.

A straight and lengthen'd lonely road
Conjoins its northern end ;
An opposite path severe and steep
Assumes a sudden bend.

Dense tangled mops of hazel trees,
With frowsy shrubs between,
Impend, far-stretching, sloping banks
Till scarce a patch is seen.

Betwixt its banks, profusely fring'd
With duckweed, broom, and fern,
There runs a copious brawling stream,
Brown as its parent tarn.

Now, by a chief who shrewdly notes
The fittest lurking ground,
A better ambush for a "force"
Was ne'er designed nor found.

Sterne for a while in silent thought
Beside his charger stood,
Until he saw who seem'd a spy
Emerging from a wood.

'Twas Ruary, who as fleet's a roe,
All runners else outstripp'd ;
Two "men" pursuing hoped to seize,
And have the fellow whipp'd.

On the lonely road there lies a cairn,
Where every pilgrim stops,
And drops a stone to raise a "tomb"
Where shepherds found a corpse.

When passing this funereal mound,
The smuggler, free from fear,
Wheel'd round and saw the foremost "man"
Ten paces to the rear.

Finding his match for speed he clutch'd
A pounder from the mound,
Then from a sure, left-handed fling,
"Pursuer" bit the ground.

The other learn'd discretion now,
And ceased the mad pursuit :
He fear'd a second "tomb" might rise—
Perhaps his own to boot.

Just then a signal from a scout
Put Sterne upon his guard ;
For other rivals now appear'd,
More terrible than Ard.

"Now, Adjutant, let every man
His cutlass hold in hand ;
And let us crush, this very night,
This daring rebel band."

The scout was heard (but scarcely seen)
To hurry down the brae,
And, on arriving at the bridge,
Reports, without delay :

"A numerous squad appears to guard
The carriage and the 'Still.'
The moment's precious : hear their din !
They're winding round the hill."

By rapid signs from hand and voice
The chief arranged his " Staff ;"
While hollow'd slopes and rocks return'd
The hurrying smugglers' laugh.

When half across the scanty bridge,
The convoy faintly hear
The trampling of approaching steps
In front, in flank, and rear.

" Surrender," in stentorian tone,
Inspector Sterne exclaim'd ;
He scarce had order'd, when a club
Against his head was aim'd.

(The rumour ran—was Rumour true?—
Thine, Campbell, was the arm
That rais'd a weapon 'twixt the two,
And stay'd impending harm,

Thy cutlass, clansman, firmly clench'd,
Surpris'd the sanguine foe ;
With quicker slash the chief you fenc'd,
And laid th' assailant low.

For this, mayhap, the Muses thus
Enshrine thy martial name :
Through Burns, their son, thy Mary lives
In never-dying fame.)

Resistance aim'd at legal pow'r
Retort in turn provoked :
For in a trice Misrule and Law
In deadly grip were lock'd.

Now, man to man, and fist to fist,
On fair and open field,
A Highland tike will face his match,
And scorn, till death, to yield ;

But much it gall'd the clannish host
That close fight they maintain
With, chiefly, saplings long and soft,
'Gainst weapons short and keen.

Hither and thither on the bridge,
On heath, and rock, and sward,
The conflict sway'd as either foe
Preferr'd to strike or guard.

Here combatants contend in groups,
And there in single pairs :
While both are brave, the loss of blood
The smugglers' vigour wears.

Yet Fortune, eyeing with concern
The strife's unequal terms,
The plucky clansman aids at times
And th' officers disarms.

The mountaineers by force or skill
The enemy throw or trip,
And then th' exulting victors wrest
The cutlass from their grip.

Then woe betide the prostrate frames,
Or theirs who upright stand,
Who feel the weight of stick or dag
Descending in their hand.

“Surrender, villains !” muttered Sterne,
In now a fainting tone ;
And adds anon—“Support me, men ;
I'm cloven to the bone.”

The rumour flies to friend and foe
That Sterne's career is o'er ;
With strange consent the carnage ends,
And weapons clash no more.

The smugglers fled ; the officers learn'd
The peril of their chief,
And bore him toward Paisley Farm
For refuge and relief.

Arriving at the nearest bend
Where two straight roads divide,
The ghastly leader heard it said
They meant to turn aside.

But, feebly raising up his foot,
Sterne press'd it 'gainst a stone,
And vow'd he 'd enter ne'er a house,
Though there he'd die alone!

While consultation 'mong his friends
Occasioned some delay,
Towards the motley gathering crowd
A stranger made his way.

With quiet step he moved about,
And scann'd each form and face,
Till, singling out a special man,
He dogg'd his every pace.

A cutlass, resting on a stone,
The prowling villain found,
And rushing on he smote his man,
And stretch'd him on the ground.

The startled crowd o'erheard the blow,
And fear'd a second death ;
Ruary was lifted off the road—
Caine bolted for the heath!

As Kerr his tale brought to a close
The audience from the table rose ;

Yet different thoughts their minds possess'd,
And diverse feelings moved their breast.
The stranger, seeming daz'd and dumb,
With furtive glances left the room ;
Nor press'd, that night, his wonted bed,
But from the Inn abruptly fled.

PATCHEN.

YOUNG Ruary Ard of Tayinloan,
And Quig of Lagnagar,
O'er steaming tumblers join'd "mine host"
Of th' old Inn of Glenbarr.

The longest hour of night had pass'd,
And morning just begun ;
And many a social song and jest
Their fleeting course had run.

"My lads, you both have come from town,"
Observes the mellow host ;
"Pray, tell me what you've heard or seen
By clachan, road, or coast."

"M'Quig, you live in Campbellton,
Where Rumour plies her trade ;
The latest news I'd gladly hear
About the quick or dead.

“ My story’s quick,” replies M’Quig,
 —“ The word my theme recalls—
 The subject of it converse stirs
 In shops, in streets and halls :—

“ A stranger (so he seem’d awhile),
 Grave, stalwart, somewhat grey,
 Was lately rescued from the wreck
 That strew’d Dunarty Bay.

“ Some days he tarried in Ceannloch,
 Attent, but scant of speech ;
 But fragments of remarks, though brief,
 Did senior people reach.

“ But yester eve, beside the Dam
 That ’s westward from the town,
 Mulloy the maltster of Millknowe
 I chanced to meet, alone.

“ ‘ In friendship’s mood,’ quoth I, ‘ my lad,
 Why bend your head so low ?
 What may the theme be, pray, whereon
 Reflection you bestow ?’

“ ‘ Last night,’ the maltster made reply
 ‘ (Oddly it so befel),
 A group of us by concert met
 Within the “ Arms ” Hotel.

“ ‘ A stranger—so to some he seem’d—
 Had joined us at the Fair,
 Where older eyes his features mark’d,
 As oft they saw him there.

“ ‘ Into the Inn we press’d the wight,
 And taking, each, his cue
 From the eldest members of our core,
 A caitiff’s course we drew.

“ ‘ One sketch’d the bull fight at the Moy,
 With Stirplot in the game ;
 Another drew M’Cracken’s wiles,
 But used a borrow’d name.

“ ‘ The story of the villain Caine,
 The father’s crimes reveal’d ;
 His dire example in the son
 Like fruit was thought to yield.

“ ‘ The veteran long with unconcern
 His history seem’d to hear,
 Till, deeming danger lurk’d behind,
 His looks betokened fear.

“ ‘ Employing some adroit pretext
 The room and Inn to quit,
 He vanish’d from his doubtful friends
 With mingled dread and hate.

“ ‘ Suspicion runs that years ago
A sharper’s trick he tried :
For payment of an ill-got cheque
To a bank the rogue applied.

“ ‘ Appris’d of steps to prove his fraud
He vanished from the place ;
But, ’spite of speed and fair expense,
No search his course could trace.

“ ‘ And some, convinc’d, the rogue connect
With that vile wrecker Caine ;
While others doubt so black a knave
Would venture there again.

“ ‘ And yet have we not heard or known
The startled wandering hare,
Regardless of his scare at home,
Returns to seek his lair ?

“ ‘ ’Twas noted by a social group,
In local legends read,
The stranger winced at stories told,
And rooted fear betray’d.

“ ‘ ’Tis said a whisper reach’d his ear
Of rife suspicion stirr’d,
And that his exit from this place
His apprehensions spurr’d.

“ ‘ But quick and secret was the haste
 Wherewith he quit the town,
 And keen surmises are afloat
 Both how and where he’s gone.

“ ‘ At Lagnagar two days ago,
 At early morn, afoot,
 Myself I spied a man, unknown,
 Swift past the clachan shoot.

“ ‘ And later by a dozen hours
 I mark’d the fellow’s form
 Midway betwixt the Paisley Brig
 And old Macvoolin’s farm.

“ ‘ A pressing duty urged me then
 The moorland path to tread,
 And baulk’d me of an eager plan
 To track the vet’ran blade.’ ”

So spake M’Quig. Next, Ruary adds :—

“ A stranger, now, I saw,
 What time he scann’d the far-famed Bridge
 That stands at Killocrow.

“ ‘ Good day !’ quoth I (’twas Sabbath Day);
 ‘ You seem a stranger here ;
 There was a time when hither flocked
 Dense crowds from far and near.

“ ‘ But seldom now a stranger ’s seen
To hie him to this spot ;
And even natives born, I fear,
Its story have forgot.’

“ ‘ Pray, tell what charm enrich’d the bridge
Such homage to secure ?
And wherefore,’ adds th’ inquirer,
Does ’t now no more allure ?’

“ ‘ Hast thou not heard, though elsewhere born,
Of either hallow’d stone,
Whose substance if a pilgrim touch’d,
He felt his cares were gone ?’

“ ‘ Oh ! tell me,’ says the stranger, wan,
‘ Where lies that stone so blest,
That may give peace to careworn man,
And ease the laden breast ?’

“ ‘ Here stand no more the tablets dear !’
With sorrow I replied ;
‘ Unhallow’d hands the bridge have sack’d,
And spoil’d it of its pride !

“ ‘ In Patchen churchyard, near Glenbarr,
(If rumour speaks aright,)
One tablet ’s rooted in the sand,
And almost out of sight.

“ A mausoleum, tall and stout,
A hero's dust confines ;
And 'gainst the turf that wraps his feet
The honour'd stone reclines.

“ But whether still its virtues live
In new and alien soil,
'Twere hard to prove ; to clear the doubt
None face the risk or toil.'

“ Inform me, Sir, if lofty walls,
With lock'd and sturdy gate,
Repel intruders from the tomb
At morning, noon, or late.'

“ An entrance is not hard to find,
I quickly made reply ;
'And were it not the Sabbath day,
The passage you might try.'

“ 'Be 't Sabbath day or holiday,'
Returned my desperate man,
'What aids the end on which I'm bent
I'll compass—if I can.

“ “ The better day, the better deed,”
—'Tis thus your proverb runs ;
And who that values health or wealth
The means that bring them shuns.'

“ ‘Your doctrine’s wild and wicked, too,’
I ventured to aver ;
What blessings, think you, on your heart
Can sculptured slabs confer ?

“ ‘If Heaven’s precepts good and wise
You wantonly reject,
What virtue can you in his works,
In Reason’s name, expect ?’

“ ‘What?’ says my querist, ‘don’t you know
Some tonic draughts we drink
Restore our vigour, whether right
Or foolishly we think ?

“ ‘Some fables taught me in my youth
I’ve long ago outgrown ;
All higher laws than Reason’s light
I scornfully disown.

“ ‘Such glimmerings of a different lamp
As once my fancy moved,
Through flaws in some that praised its worth,
But fitful phantoms proved.

“ ‘But this prevents me not to wish
Your creed may solace you ;
And with best thanks for favour shown
I bid you, Sir, Adieu !’”

“This eve at Ballochantee Inn,”
 (Continued Ruary Ard,)

“I chanced to pass an hour or twain
 With Coag of Glenacard.

“‘Rare are the news,’ quoth Pate M‘Coag,
 ‘That went their round yestreen ;
 For curious records have been found
 Hard by old Stewarton Inn.

“‘Mid other wreckage on the shore,
 Heav’d up by the recent storm,
 A case, much damaged, was picked up
 Near Machririach farm.

“‘A rescued youth the casket saw
 In a fellow-passenger’s hand ;
 And others add, the veteran dropp’d
 Such trifle on the strand.

“‘Within the case some letters lay
 Both manifold and plain
 To prove its owner was, in sooth,
 Allied to felon Caine.

“‘But when or how the relic chanced
 T’ escape the owner’s hand,
 The finder and consulted mates
 In doubting question stand.

“ ‘ And strange to tell, the rescued youth
Was found to be his son ;
For, though he bore an alien name,
His pedigree is known.’

“ Now with these words M‘Coag drew forth
The casket from his pouch ;
‘ There, let the relic,’ added he,
‘ My story’s truth avouch.

“ ‘ To my own hand a neighbour swain
Entrusted it this morn ;
And begg’d I’d keep it till from “ town,”
This night he should return.’

“ His tones scarce ended, when, behold !
A side-door opened wide,
And towards our seat a stranger bold
Approach’d with hasty stride.

“ ‘ I’ve heard it all—I know the worst,’
He uttered with a wail,
‘ ’Tis clear my schemes some demon checks,
And makes my ventures fail.

“ ‘ Allusions to my noxious ways,
In years now long gone past,
Elsewhere I’ve heard rehearsed with glee,
And borne them to the last.

“ ‘ But oh ! to learn my own dear son,
—The goal of fond desire—
Should—innocently though it be—
Bear witness ’gainst his sire !

“ ‘ How oft upon the perilous trip,
From Erin’s northern coast,
Did all his traits recall my spouse,
Whose love through crimes I’ ve lost !

“ ‘ What pow’r opposed my keen design
To ask his age and name ?
For views exchang’d might well have saved
My breast from later shame.

“ ‘ The casket too has traitor turn’d,
And raised the accusing voice ;
—A gift much valued, and for years,
Companion of my choice.

“ ‘ Beyond the main in regions strange,
When fortune fix’d her frown,
In memories with its history link’d
My cares I used to drown.

“ ‘ And even now, with your consent,
I’d handle it again ;
Methinks some virtue from its touch
Might greatly ease my pain.’

“This said, he swept from off the board
The idol, unopposed ;
And, hurrying back into his room,
The door he quickly closed.

“At length, much wondering why the carle
Remained so long alone,
We ventured in, but found, too late,
The man and trophy gone !”

As Ruary ended his report
To Glenbarr’s social core,
“ Mine host ” and guests, much startled, heard
Loud knocking at the door.

Admittance thankfully obtained,
Dan Stalker of the Glen,
Bareheaded and as pale’s the moon,
All-breathless, staggered in !

“ Now, Dan, why look so ghastly wan ?
Hast seen a witch or ghost ?
And have you with your bonnet blue
Your senses also lost ? ”

With bracing potions reinforced,
And breathing freely now,
The courier spreads his wondrous tale,
And seals it with a vow :—

“ In Patchen Churchyard,” whisper’d Dan,
“ I duly took my turn,
To guard the tomb where rests the dust
Of Blair of Calliburn.

“ At midnight, by the moon’s dull sheen,
My partner of the guard
Directs my vision to a form
Slow creeping o’er the sward.

“ ‘ By angels bright, and angels dark,’
My cronie faintly swore
That, should his life be longer spared,
Some follies he’d give o’er.

“ He vow’d his habits and his words
And morals, too, he’d mend ;
His carritch he’d take up again,
And whiles the Kirk attend.

“ The smuggling trade he’ll not renew
For all that’s best on earth ;
He’ll sell nor sheep nor stirk for more
Than what he deems its worth.

“ While ‘ Amen ’ halted in his throat,
—For fear t’would seal his vow,—
He mutter’d queries, as he cross’d
His bosom and his brow.

“ ‘What may that crawling substance be?
Is ’t demon or is ’t brute?
’Twere loss to slay the one, and vain
The other fiend to shoot.

“ ‘See! there! Still nearer comes the form
And rears its figure tall!
Now, shall I fire a pistol shot,
And pierce it with a ball?’

“ ‘Consider, Dan,’—I whispered low—
‘What dreadful risk you run;
Your noisy shot may miss its aim
And challenge more than one.

“ ‘Mayhap, he’s leader of a squad
That, bent on lucre foul,
For bodies of the recent dead
In churchyards nightly prowls.’

“ ‘But when the figure reach’d the fence
That circles Patchen’s ‘yard,’
It stopp’d as though our shapes it saw,
And timid whispers heard.

“ ‘By all that’s great,’ the ogre ask’d,
‘What may your natures be?
Pray, are you phantoms Fate employs
To stand ‘twixt peace and me?’

“Then vowing vengeance to the wight
Who should his steps pursue,
He turn'd abruptly to the right,
And from our sight withdrew.

“Some time ensued ere either guard
His wit or sense regains:
For curdling fears our frames benumb,
And freeze our stagnant veins.

“Anon the fence we leapt, with hearts
More curious still than brave,
And saw the wretch ascend the gate
That guards the warrior's grave.

“With mutual terror each beheld
His true or fancied foe ;
The climber dropp'd upon the ground
And 'gainst us uttered—woe!

“ ‘ My curses on you, one and all,
But on that caitiff most
Whose startling tone by th' “ Magic Stone ”
My final venture cross'd.’

“ Now, where or how the baffled loon
Has sought a safe retreat
I can't divine ; methinks, like me,
He owes't to nimble feet.”

Oh! here, methought, might many a waif,
From further lures or cronies safe,
 His wayward life redeem ;
Temptation's siren tone and wile,
The spendthrift here could not beguile,
 Nor spread her witching scheme ;
Where lovely scenes in constant view
Engage th' enraptur'd eye,
The heart, one thinks, should take their hue,
As lakes reflect the sky.

A truant whim my steps impell'd,
(With others by like fancy held,) `
 One day to wander here ;
Exhausted and by hunger press'd,
We turn'd aside for needed rest,
 And eke for needed cheer.
With languid feet and wavering hope,
And doubts ne'er felt before,
We paced a gently-rising slope,
And reach'd the cottage door.

Faintly we knock'd and knock'd again,
Until we deem'd all knocking vain,
 —For answer came there none :
Curious the inner parts to scan,
And know forsooth if brute or man
 Possess'd a den so lone,

The knotted cord we slowly drew
 With soft and bated breath ;
 While changeful vistas rose to view,
 —Relief—or, may be, death !

The creaking hinge (but seldom turned)
 A drowsy inmate quickly warn'd
 Of some intruder's "call" :
 With furious frown a hoary slave
 Began in horrid terms to rave,
 And ban us—one and all.
 Then with a laugh divorced from mirth,
 A well-shod crutch he grasp'd,
 Resolved, it seem'd, to fence his hearth,
 While, faint, for breath he gasp'd.

With effort more than he could bear
 He partly rear'd him from his lair
 Of rushes loose and sear ;
 Then trembling with insensate rage
 —Ill suited to his strength and age—
 He dared us to come near !
 Brief was his speech : his ebbing force
 Th' intended threat denies ;
 Yet not the less we read the curse
 That fired his vengeful eyes.

The vehement tumult of his brain
 Soon overbore his might and main
 Till Nature's force gave way,

'Mid worthless rubbish out there roll'd
A casket bruis'd and plain ;
Inside the lid, in letters bold,
Was graven : " Joseph Caine."

NOT GUILTY, MY LADY.

LATELY a blast as fierce and doure
As ever twisted thatch and stoure,
Or shot its keen malignant pow'r
Through limb or chest,
Smote Preston Street with gust and show'r
From east to west.

At the corner of this open street,
Where whirling winds in conflict meet,
A bluish, shoeless pair of feet
Of tender age,
Endured the snell and drizzling sleet
And tempest's rage.

Loop'd was his coat with many a hole,
(If 't is a coat where nought is whole,)
And many a wistful glance he stole
At well-happ'd folk,
Whose lot exposed them less to thole
Fell poortith's yoke.

And sturdy men and maids went past,
All proof against the cold and blast,
Yet no one seem'd a look to cast
 At the cow'ring boy
Who slowly crept, and whiles ran fast
 On some employ.

A stately dame among the rest,
In densest "Ulster" amply dress'd,
Toward the corner nimbly press'd
 The drift to shun ;
And, trusting she had 'scaped the blast,
 Walk'd slowly on.

She hoped too much : the veering gale
Spread out her Ulster like a sail ;
And sometimes, too, its fringe would trail
 Along the ground ;
'Twas there our urchin seem'd to hail
 A shelter found.

Behind the folds the shivering wight
Now tack'd to left, now wheel'd to right,
From where the squall was at its height
 To leeward side.
But yet he strove from Madam's sight
 His *trips* to hide.

A spacious window in a row,
Whereon some folks a glance bestow,

—Whether intentionally or no
Is left to guess—
Caught Madam's eye and buist to show
Her air and dress.

The polish'd glass too well reveal'd
The laddie skulking near his bield ;
The fair one, guessing he conceal'd
A roguish plan,
With sudden turn adroitly wheel'd,
And caught her "man."

Then with a keen suspicious frown,
And in a grand and stilted tone,
In language choice as Milton's own,
She told her mind :
She might as well impeach a stone
Or rate the wind.

Her threats fell pointless on his ear
—Her tropes were far beyond his lear—
Or, haply, waked, instead of fear,
A hopeful thought ;
For there he crouch'd, still lingering near,
Suspecting nought.

At length it dawn'd upon the lad
That he was reckoned of the squad
That sell themselves to all that's bad
In thought and fact :

That Madam really meant t' upbraid
Some odious act.

Charg'd roundly with intent to steal,
His peril he began he feel,
And, on his brow though shone the seal
Of innocence,
He trusted wholly to his heel
For self-defence.

A melting look of poignant grief
He turn'd on her who charg'd with rief
His guileless heart, that claimed relief—
Not frowns and blame.
Mayhap, where best he's known, as thief
None soil his name.

Restrain reproach, my lady fair ;
Conclude not, though his feet are bare,
The squalid bairn before you there
Is old in crime—
His thin-clad frame a heart may wear
As pure as thine.

His parents' sufferings—who knows?—
To hardships may the brat expose,
And urge him forth 'mid driving snows
In mean array ;
While richest robes oft cover those
Who prowl for prey.

ANGEL IN DISGUISE.

ON pleasure and on strolling bent,
Some years ago an hour I spent
 Beside the Castle's base,
Where Ross's Fountain sheds a spray,
Which, blending with the solar ray,
 Reflects the rainbow's grace.
While gazing at this fairy sight
 —This curve of varied hue—
I found myself beside a wight
 Who also scann'd the view.

His negligent and rugged mien
Contrasted oddly with the scene:
 He look'd a stranger there.
What pleasure can this fellow find
(The thought rose often to my mind)
 In ev'n views so fair?
He seems to care and struggle brought;
 Deep furrows mark his brow;
His hardships scarcely could, I thought,
 Aesthetic joys allow.

Or is 't some roguish part he plays
While o'er the walks and sward he strays
 Below Edina's Rock?

His owner's eye flash'd joyous light
As birdie's tale he told.
I blush'd to think I once could slight
The man as vagrant bold.

That man could analyse the form
The rainbow borrows from the storm,
And how its hues combine ;
Could trace the rise and fall of states ;
How nations' pow'r on virtue waits,
And must with vice decline.

An orphan, too, secured a share
Of both his time and watchful care
Within his humble walls ;
A pallid ward of tender years
Abruptly on the scene appears,
And recent thoughts recalls.
—That self-same boy whom, thin and bare,
With cold and hunger spent,
A dame of stately gait and air
Arraign'd with vile intent.

“ Pray, may I ask who this may be
That scarce in aught resembles thee,
At least in outward form ?
Me lists to note his looks improv'd
Since last within my sight he moved,
Unsheltered, in a storm.

Yet sure to mete out good for ill
 And love for hate, were to fulfil
 The gracious law of Heav'n.
 'Tis bliss to learn the orphan boy
 In you had found a friend ;
 Henceforth let me divide your joy,
 And joint assistance lend.'

“ Thus spake the lady, and with grace
 Within my hands a gift did place
 —A present for the hour ;
 ‘ Accept this dole,’ she further said,
 ‘ Till fuller schemes by me are laid
 To help your ward with more.
 On me devolve all future care
 For the Miser’s ill-starr’d son.
 May Heaven train him to beware
 The course his fathers ran !’ ”

In Ocean’s troubled, various tide
 Concurrent floods its mass divide ;
 Beside cold streams that press below
 Benignant tepid billows flow ;
 Atop, the warmer volumes roll,
 And blessings spread from Pole to Pole.
 The lower depths their influence prove,
 Till in their place, in turn, they move.

Who should not hope that, led by Heav'n,
To Caine's grandson it might be giv'n
From dire disgrace and want to rise,
And tread the path where honour lies ;
To bless that generous Dame for aye
Who early prov'd his firmest stay ;
And greet in her, for years to come,
A child of Mary of the Drum.

FINIS.

THE OLD COLLEGE OF GLASGOW.

DEAR Alma Mater, where in life's fair morn
 My zeal for study and for books was born ;
 Still love I to recall the joyous days
 When first thy portals drew my reverent gaze :
 When Homer's Epics and where Roman themes
 Woke visions fairer than the world of dreams ;
 When fervid eloquence and chasten'd fire,
 Adorn'd with kindness worthy of a sire,
 My frigid apathy to ardour stirr'd,
 Or from success to stiffer efforts spurr'd.

Professor Ramsay, steep'd in Roman lore,
 Too soon for Scotland thy career was o'er !
 To the Latin Chair in early life ordain'd,
 The fame it gather'd nobly he sustained.
 In him "Humanity" fit exponent found,
 Why finest Culture should with worth be bound.

Still in my ears his manly accents live ;
 And Memory's pages back his image give,
 As Cicero's periods or Tibullus' Lays
 His skill unfolded to the Students' gaze ;
 Portray'd their beauties—every shade and tone—
 In tropes as terse and classic as their own.

My College chums (How few are still alive !),
 Whose memories yet life's chequer'd scenes survive,

Fresh in your minds must live the graphic force
Wherewith he traced Rome's Empire to its source
Approv'd her triumphs when with Right allied,
And show'd how ruin sprang from ease and pride.
(For later times as well the sketch was meant,
And Students, too, might note the timely hint.)
How flash'd his eye when early Roman worth
He track'd in all that's great and strong on earth ;
Though savage hordes to shame Rome's Legions
brought,

Her tongue now rules their speech and modes of
thought ;

The mould or spirit of our modern Laws
From Roman Codes its strength and pressure draws.
Though prostrate lies the Nation's outward frame,
Her Genius lives and guards her hoary Fame ;
Her " heav'n-dropped shield " o'er sacred Laws he
throws,

And trains in Art the offspring of her foes.

Impulsive, fluent, fervid, swift, and keen,
Able he render'd what his " Authors " mean ;
Observed the tangles in the Tyro's road,
And clear'd his passage or assum'd his load.
As when a Chief to arduous combat prone,
Precedes his troops and guides their journey on ;
The Leader's dash anticipates the fight,
Assures his host and makes their conflict light.
Thus Ramsay's students quickly cover'd ground

Of Reading ample while its base was sound.
 Stragglers he chid, but yet in tone so kind,
 The censure left no rankling scar behind.

With Science, too, of Nature and Mankind,
 The keen expert enrich'd his plastic mind ;
 When College brethren, holding cognate Chairs,
 From flagging force, that age or tension wears,
 At duty fail'd, reluctant, to appear,
 The Roman linguist amply filled their sphere.

Not more his knowledge, copious though it was,
 Than love of Country, claim'd and won applause ;
 Though foreign Halls th' accomplish'd Scholar
 train'd,
 A Scot by birth, a Scotsman he remain'd.

Another Scholar and as leal a man,
 (In scales their merits who shall weigh—or can ?)
 My admiration and my homage drew,
 And passing years the tribute still renew.

Happy the Senate, happy ev'n the Land,
 That could such Teachers in one age command ;
 Who, heav'n endow'd with pow'r and gifts to teach,
 Reap'd early fruit that many never reach.
 Yet diverse features through their Teaching ran,
 As mutual aids in Nature's sapient plan.

Professor Lushington, pray forbear to blame
 The ardent lips that quote thy honour'd name.
 If o'er my spirit still the Grecian Muse
 In thoughtful leisure can a spell diffuse,

The pleasing thought on which my soul delays
Comes sweetly moulded in thy pregnant phrase ;
To thee I owe the impulse to pursue
The subtle train research may bring to view ;
To cope with obstacles at sight austere,
But nursing pith for those that persevere.
Could Greek to Students dull or spell-less be,
Who saw its mould and grace unveil'd by thee ?
My fellow students, bear with me, I pray,
If here with you my thoughts the past survey.
Like me you feel the lov'd Professor's spell
Through later days in fondest memory dwell.
The thought of Greece reflected from his mind
Man's highest culture and its force combined.
Unconscious pow'r and tact the sage display'd :
In briefest maxims volumes he convey'd.
Observant of the Greek's fastidious tongue,
Where subtle sense on particles is strung :
Where accent signs if ev'n they wrongly slope
Obscure the context or pervert its scope,
The noteful critic traced the finer thought,
And charm'd the Fancy while he Reason taught.
Patient to see the Student thread his way
His aid was offer'd ere he seem'd to stray.
The genial guide his footsteps would direct,
Yet, while assisting, nurs'd his self-respect.
Not less his kindness did affection gain
Than did his Learning th' understanding train.

A nameless pow'r his look and tone possess'd :
They quicken'd thought and yet misrule repress'd ;
Placid himself, his mildness others sway'd,
Secure of order without sterner aid.

Our Northern prejudice 'gainst English traits
His worth transmuted into cordial praise.
Such gifts as here with cultured grace combine
Efface the bounds that jealous Nations join.
Who does not now exchange a kinder glow
With those whose sires for ages proved our foe ?
In closer union let us knit the band,
As common empire and success demand.
Let Scot and Saxon hold their joint career :
What jealous Pow'r—what menace shall we fear ?

Well hast thou, Glasgow, now thy duty done
To Sister England and thy foster Son :
Lord Rector of thy Academic Seat
Law Lushington thy learnèd Councils greet.
Well worthy he o'er conclaves to preside
That nurture Lore and plodding Science guide.
Survivor of the corps of other times
Who taught our youth and those of other climes,
The symbol-wreath the Students offer you
Infolds some leaflets for your Colleagues, too.

With deeper interest doubtless you will wear
Honours you would with dear companions share ;
And every " cheer " that thrills your loyal breast
In thought you'll echo to the friends at rest.

Ah ! me ; the ancient walls will not prolong
The echoes startled by th' applauding throng,
When Installation seals the Council's choice,
And in its strain Saint Mungo blends her voice.
My Mater's shade ! the vandal pow'rs confound
That razed thy sacred structure to the ground ;
That sacrificed to noisy, sooty Trade
The Muses' Temple and the College glade !

Farewell, ye towers, Courts, and sombre Halls
Whose ancient form fell Ruin now recalls.
My pray'r is pious when I wish the New
As rare success as ages heap'd on you.

O happy eve, that Fortune held in store
To bless the students with one meeting more ;
When festive boards the Rector blandly graced
With brother Savans in due order placed.
Sections of Classes 'neath a nameless spell
Once more beheld the face they loved so well.
An angel's mind alone the joy could mete
In those that met their honour'd guest to greet.
How on his lips the Students old and young
With rapt attention and devotion hung,
When th' old familiar voice in graceful phrase
In fondness dwelt on other halcyon days :
When scraps of Greek, to hearers known or no,
Recall'd a trait that charm'd us long ago.
The same old glow suffused those azure eyes,
Where love with shrewdness—tact with vigour lies.

True to his nature, shrinking from applause
 He prized the love of which he was the cause ;
 To others traced his tenure of success,
 Ignoring self, but others prone to bless.
 Here we beheld anew the fruitful source
 That bred a love that still extends its force.
 The self-denying mood—the courteous air,
 The gentle voice—the grand old man was there.
 Not less—perhaps more, grateful to our ear,
 The terms where favours friend to friend endear.
 “Owre kind,” you styled your Students’ loud acclaim,
 When the Chairman’s toast announced your magic
 name.

“Favours,” you quoted, “love in turn beget” ;
 And here receivers partly paid their debt.

In “Auld Lang Syne,” with ardour due our Bard,
 Your lips responded to our fond regard ;
 And never shall our quicken’d minds forget
 Your pledge to quaff “a cup of kindness yet.”
 The cup of joy with blessings running o’er,
 May Heaven grant you now and evermore.

31st March 1885.

BURNS AND SCOTT.

MET ONCE AND (APPARENTLY) ONLY ONCE.

The place of Meeting—"Sheens House," Grange, Edinburgh.
Thoughts suggested by a recent visit to the room where the
interview occurred.

JUST three-and-ninety years their course have run
Since 'neath this roof—long may it ruin shun—
There met, like planets in conjunction placed,
Two mighty pow'rs, with highest genius graced.
Though several years their natal day divide,
Their mutual sympathies were deep and wide.

The one—a darling of the tuneful Nine,
Whose brows already fadeless bays entwine—
With conscious worth a learnèd conclave meets,
And host and guest with modest ardour greets ;
Scions of rank before the ploughman stoop,
And give him welcome to their chary group.

Another guest, the "Great Unknown" to come,
From meekness seeks a corner of the room,
And thence with placid awe the Bard surveys
Whom peer and peasant loved alike to praise.

Assembled here are other gifted minds,
Whom admiration for one subject binds ;
High on the roll of fame they've traced their names,
And grateful science proudly owns their claims.

Whatever problems varied minds pursue
 To drag time-honour'd errors into view,
 From thought's mixed soil to pluck the noxious weed,
 And fix the basis of a solid creed,
 Received solution from th' assembled band
 That met the Bard and gave the friendly hand :
 Blair, Black, and Hutton, Home, and Stewart join
 To stamp approval of his Muse's coin.
 'Twas meet that sages vers'd in nature's laws,
 In springs of action, and in Error's cause,
 Should welcome genial Fancy's brightest star,
 And prove that talents wage no jealous war.

Congenial, too, the spot where all had met—
 "The Sheens"—a form of what's remembered yet
 As Sienna. Hard by stood, some paces west,
 A convent, oft the anxious pilgrim's rest.
 Tradition thus a halo spreads around
 The ancient "Sheens," and claims the hallow'd ground.

Within, without, these memorable walls
 Scenes once enacted fancy yet recalls ;
 But chief of these, the present scene appeals
 To every breast the patriot's glow that feels.
 See ! here the Bard whose converse wields a spell
 More potent than his songs—as records tell.

Anon, a picture hanging on a wall
 Invites regard—he answers to the call.
 Subjoined are verses, couch'd in plaintive tone,
 In language choice, and pregnant as his own :

A British soldier streaks a snowy plain
 With purple streams that ebbing vigour drain ;
 A youthful widow, crush'd by cruel fate,
 With cureless anguish mourns her fallen mate.

Through ample tears that course his manly cheeks
 The wounded bosom of the poet speaks :
 " Can any here," he asks, " the author name
 Whose happy lot it was these lines to frame ?"
 Philosophers, divines, alike are dumb,
 From neither would the answer seem to come !

'T was then the Boy, precocious, lame, and pale,
 In whispers named the writer of the tale.
 O gifted Scott ! it thus was early thine
 To show the rôle wherein thy parts would shine.

(An omen this where seers may recognise
 What future triumph in this Mentor lies.
 Ev'n then his memory had treasur'd stores
 That yet would charm his own and other shores.)

Surpris'd and pleas'd, the Bard rewards the Boy
 With words that note an elder brother's joy :
 " *A man you yet shall be :*" prophetic terms !
 And every year the prophecy confirms.

What mystic speech that mutual look conveys
 From eyes that met in momentary gaze ;
 What magic fire lit up the youthful brain
 From those dark orbs where pow'r and pity reign ;
 What happy grace this " ordination " gave
 To deck a legend or portray the brave ;

Did subtle virtue from the Poet dart
 (By neither notic'd) to the Minstrel's heart?
 Who can assert? Yet who can prove 't untrue
 That Scott from Burns his inspiration drew?

Ye potent wizards! 'neath this roof ye pass'd
 One short eventful hour—the first, the last.
 From this ye part, on different errands bent,
 For men's delight to spend and to be spent:—

To wake to view the heroes of the past,
 And o'er their lives a radiant halo cast;
 To trace in Tales each human passion's phase,
 The strife of Clans, the pomp of Feudal days,
 Engag'd the younger in his life-long toil,
 And made immortal Scotia's rugged soil.

But who can Burns' matchless feats describe?—
 A son of toil, yet foremost of his tribe.

The whims of youth, the woes and pains of age,
 Our joys and fears, his lucid pen engage;
 The present age, the past, and future, too,
 He sketch'd in colours ever bright and true;
 And as the dews that upward seek the skies
 Refresh again the sources whence they rise,
 So Burns' affections, shed o'er all mankind,
 From human breasts their native fountain find:
 Back to his name the blended tide we roll
 Of griefs and joys that once possess'd his soul.

'Tis thus the Novelist and Coila's Bard
 For Scotland earns the stranger's high regard:

Whatever fame our Land abroad obtains
 That tempts the Foreigner to seek our plains,
 And why that Fame o'er Earth so widely runs
 Is mainly due to these her peerless sons.

Who, then, the tear of sorrow can arrest,
 At all the griefs our Benefactors press'd?
 'Tis sad that those who countless thousands charm
 So long encounter'd dire Misfortune's storm :
 That clouds of gloom bedimm'd their fruitful day,
 And veil'd the splendour of its setting ray.

Then, ancient "Sheens," in stately grandeur stand !
 And woo the tourist from remotest land.
 Ye local Genii, long protect the spot
 Where Robert Burns *ordain'd* Sir Walter Scott.

December 1879.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

IN MEMORIAM.

FAME's spacious Temple still unfolds its gate,
 And offers welcome to the good and great ;
 Though envied niches ancient worth reward,
 Enshrine the warrior, statesman, and the bard,
 Fame still propitious, fruitful talent greets
 And Merit's praise in every age repeats.

Regardless of the country, race, or clime,
Of states obscure, or realms become sublime,
She still on labour, virtue, genius beams,
And from eclipse their genial light redeems.

'Tis well ordain'd—since life is but a span,
That all that 's godlike in imperfect man
Should live a power in all coming time
To foster virtue and diminish crime.

Abjuring deeds that charm the thoughtless mind,
That glut the victor and the victim bind,
Content to strike alone for Freedom's cause,
For pure religion and for equal laws,
Old Scotland claims the meed of honest fame,
And spurns the triumph that's allied to shame.

States more ambitious and of wider bounds,
With whose exploits the spacious globe resounds,
May Scotland envy for the trophies won
In valiant conflict for the rights of man.

While ample realms are struggling to be free
And taste of Freedom's still forbidden tree ;
Our narrow isle enjoys its luscious fruit
And guards with zeal each spreading branch and root.

Oh ! shade of Bruce ! to thee our nation owes
A timely rescue from her grasping foes ;
Thy wary skill and thy undaunted breast
Unbound the yoke that long thy country press'd ;
From southern domination thus releas'd
In wealth and worth the race has e'er increas'd.

Nor can we Knox with honour less regard
 For breaking bonds more ponderous still and hard.
 His was the courage and the sturdy hand
 That struck Rome's fetters from the groaning land ;
 Redeem'd from thraldom crushing speech and thought,
 The nation's spirit own'd the truth he taught.

Deep in our bosoms must we also bear
 The ploughman Bard, the tuneful swan of Ayr,
 Whose gloomy fate and sweetly-sounding lyre
 Now move to tears—now martial hosts inspire.
 'Twas his to rend th' exclusive fence of Caste
 And sing that men should brothers be at last.

For whom shall history the space prepare
 That forms the remnant of the magic square ?
 What kindred genius shall secure the niche ?
 What modern seer the lofty height can reach ?

The answer needs no labour'd mental toil ;
 Each quivering tongue at once proclaims : "Carlyle."
 Worthy is he to share the same regard
 As Bruce, and Knox, and Scotia's peerless bard.
 No pen than his more truly sketched their traits,
 No oracle so justly spoke their praise.
 A fresher halo now surrounds their head
 E'er since this scribe their several feats display'd.

In times when Culture graced the brightest minds,
 Where human pow'r its utmost limit finds ;
 When giant intellects had gain'd the height
 Of Lore's steep summit and survey'd its light,

To Chelsea's sage all gave the foremost place,
And hail'd him Monarch of the critic race.

With ruthless knife time-honoured shams he
trench'd,
And many a bubble's rainbow hues he quench'd ;
The hollow mask of cant he sternly tore,
And stripped empirics of the bays they wore ;
Unsparing rigour mark'd his open raid
On fulsome Literature's ignoble trade.

Yet generous praise he pour'd on modest worth,
And nurs'd to strength what faintly breath'd at birth ;
"The bruised reed" he propp'd with tender care,
And rescued Merit from a mean career.

A grave historian, wise above his age,
The woes of States he traced to faction's rage ;
He track'd a law pervading place and time :—
That civil ruin springs from civil crime.

Not Britain only felt his wholesome sway,
And pray'd that Heav'n might bless his lengthen'd
day ;

For Europe's scholars saw with ravish'd eyes
Th' effulgent planet in the western skies.
Both hemispheres, in sooth, his influence own
And cull the fruit of what his hand has sown ;
All sages con the maxims that he wrote,
And borrow lustre from the views they quote.

Loyal to Truth (or what assum'd her form),
He early faced each thinker's mental storm ;

The struggle, doubtless, cost him many a sigh,
 As cherish'd visions vanish'd from his eye ;
 Yet who so well his mission could have fill'd,
 Whose earnest labours priceless treasures yield ?

Good-humoured, kind, affectionate, and true,
 Prone to forgive, and swift to punish too ;
 While haughty pomp the manly seer repell'd,
 With hooks of steel the friends he won he held.
 A duller sky, methinks, impends the land
 Since this brave life has run its latest sand.

Farewell ! Carlyle, of memory sweet and blest,
 May native turf lie lightly on your breast !
 Rest ! more revered than Prince or Chief of Clan—
 A matchless critic and an honest man.

7th February 1881.

CHALMERS.

THIS day commemorates th' auspicious birth
 Of one of Heaven's choicest gifts to earth.
 A hundred years have come and roll'd away
 Since time recorded Chalmers' natal day ;
 And every age that mortal worth reveres,
 Shall name him prince among his order's peers.

In the morn of life, while fancy's sway prevail'd,
 The Church's cause with ardent zeal he hail'd ;

Parental virtues and the charms of home
Suggested visions of the world to come.

Sublime conceptions, strange in one so young,
Found apt expression from his fluent tongue ;
While yet a boy a Senate's praise he drew,
For gift in pray'r, for thoughts profound and new ;
A vigorous body and a soul of fire,
Supplied a pow'r the Church might soon require.

Gifted with talents equal to the toil
Of mining deep in Science' varied soil ;
The sceptic's thrusts he foil'd with dext'rous skill,
And prov'd that Faith and Truth are allies still.

Doubtless, the whirl of shallow unbelief,
Awhile o'erwhelmed his glowing heart with grief ;
Material views of Nature's mystic maze
Bedimm'd his vision with a transient haze.

But as the quivering magnet seeks the pole,
The force of truth reclaim'd and fix'd his soul.
As the stout oak that 'gainst the storms has striv'n,
Extends its roots and rears its head to heav'n,
So, tried with doubts, this novice grasp'd the truth,
And prov'd the strength of anxious age and youth.

Ordained to guide the footsteps of a flock,
And teach the virtues of the smitten Rock,
Whatever theme profoundest love supplies
To lead the groping traveller to the skies,
He lit with fancy's ever-varying hue,
And open'd mysteries to the ravish'd view.

Soon busy Rumour spread his growing fame,
Till wider scenes resounded with his name.
Soon sweet Kilmany felt the parting pang,
While other vales with joyous echoes rang.

The western capital mentions yet with pride
How Chalmers' triumphs are with hers allied.
Then might be seen at noontime of the day,
When speculation wields her potent sway,
The merchant, rushing from engrossing work,
To hear this pastor lecture in the kirk.
The callous worldling, who for years abstain'd
From wholesome themes wherein his youth was
train'd

Was led, by views propos'd with matchless pow'r,
To 'vail the past, and now redeem the hour.
He who for years avoided Zion's gate
Might now be seen on holy rites to wait ;
Imbued with zeal they never felt before
Commercial magnates throng'd the mission door ;
For better treasures they made haste to toil,
And clutch from misery immortal spoil ;
Then Glasgow flourish'd by the preached Word,
And ransom'd hosts enlisted for the Lord.
And sage philosopher who faith contemn'd,
When feeble rhetoric its worth proclaim'd,
Now own'd its claims when press'd with solid lore,
Embrac'd religion and its badges wore.

Not Scotland only gloried in her son—

But England, too, in Chalmers honour won—
 For learnèd France transcendent genius own'd,
 And Britain's son with fadeless laurels crown'd.

In England, nurse of learning and of art,
 Of all that guides the mind or trains the heart,
 Ungrudging homage waited on the Scot,
 While Churches' shibboleths were all forgot.

The proudest champions of Church and State,
 In Chalmers hail'd a leal and doughty mate,
 Peer, priest, and prelate, youth and hoary sage
 Pronounce the Celt the preacher of the age.
 If Doric accents marr'd his rare discourse,
 The more sublime appear'd the inner force.

'Tis thus a vigorous tree's expanding pow'r
 Divides a wall, or rends a ponderous tow'r ;
 The accidental thus in both gives way,
 And living energies their strength betray.

St Andrews' Halls and fair Edina's, too,
 From far and near enraptur'd students drew ;
 The spell of Chalmers' Academic fame
 Evok'd a spirit Time has fail'd to tame.
 And many a "light" that now illumines the Church
 Its radiance caught from his effulgent torch.

When troublous times the Nation's Church dis-
 tress'd,
 Disturb'd her peace and Academic rest ;
 When anxious hearts, for Zion's freedom moved,
 Resolv'd to quit the Kirk they dearly lov'd,

The sage professor, patriarch, and guide
 Position, status, prospects flung aside ;
 At duty's call (for such to him it seem'd)
 The old Reformers' chivalry redeem'd.

A mighty host the veteran leader sway'd,
 Trac'd out its journey and its counsels weigh'd,
 Repress'd impatient, prompted sluggish minds,
 And plied the tact that adverse force combines.

And yet, with instincts true to th' heavenly birth,
 He set at nought the transient smiles of Earth ;
 The rescued waifs of ignorance and sin
 Composed the triumph he was bent to win.

See now the tribute to his foresight paid !
 The Powers yield the boon for which he pray'd.
 The reign of justice Chalmers well descried,
 And won for others rights to him denied.

'Twas thus the latest champion of these lands
 Extorted *freedom* from usurping hands,
 Yet none more warmly laud his honour'd name
 Than those whose views his *policy* condemn.
 Friends and opponents his alliance quote,
 And borrow guidance from the themes he wrote.

Well worthy he to rank with other four,
 Whose patriot deeds shall live for evermore ;
 With Bruce and Knox, Carlyle and Robert Burns,
 This modern Bossuet may compare by turns ;
 A nation's guide in times of grave concern,
 He fear'd no foe however stout and stern ;

An author brilliant, versatile and strong,
He spared no creed he knew or thought was wrong.

Like Burns, whose genius charm'd his loving gaze,
The Muses graced him with the pithy phrase ;
The social glow, a fancy quick and rare,
Alike enrich'd the strong and gifted pair.
Yet special virtues Chalmers' memory wreath :
Some nobler traits his life and death bequeath :

No fellow-mortal sank beneath his blow,
Ev'n on a plea to stay his country's woe ;
No Vandal impulse urged his zealous mind—
To foes austere—mayhap to Queen unkind,
No baneful theories floated on his breath
To blight the vigour of a wholesome faith ;
No turgid passion sway'd his latest days,
Provok'd regret, and blurr'd his polish'd bays.

Humane to all, submissive to the Throne,
Whose sceptre ruled him, and his homage won ;
Seraphic ardour moves his latest sighs,
In hallow'd peace the Christian patriot dies.

EDINBURGH, *3rd March* 1880.

LIEUTENANT IRVING.

IN MEMORIAM.

7th Dec. 1881.

WHY sounds the pibroch that sad wail I hear?
Or why so grave each countenance you meet?
Why do ev'n strangers drop the tender tear?
Why rush the crowds along the busy street?

No common grief to-day Edina moves,
No recent sorrow shades her saddened brow;
To-day in sighs her constant heart she proves,
While o'er his grave her children lowly bow.

Nurs'd 'mid the comforts of a genial home,
And sure of service on his native seas,
A noble impulse bade him further roam,
Confronting danger, famine, and disease.

A comrade braver Franklin could not choose
Than Irving, scion of a Scottish stock,
To dare encounter with the Polar flocs,
The fitful current and the icy rock.

For mankind's good as well's for Britain's fame,
The siren voice of ease he proudly spurn'd,
And, fired with rapture at the Patriot's flame,
He faced the fate now long and deeply mourn'd.

'Mid Arctic horrors oft his bosom sighed
O'er scenes of boyhood, youth, and college days;

Yet who can think aught so his spirit tried,
As the fears his absence in his friends might raise.

When thick-ribb'd barriers hemm'd the fleet around,
And ghastly famine mock'd her shivering crew,
They wish'd—mayhap the wish no echo found—
Their dust might rest where life's first breath they drew.

A Pow'r propitious, Irving, heard thy prayer,
And mov'd brave men to track thy turfless tomb ;
Britannia gathered with a parent's care
Thy sparse remains and bore them safely home.

This day a nation warms with loving tears
The remnants rescued from the icy mound ;
Yet none the less their memory she reveres
Who fell with thee, but no such rescue found.

Thus Britain's love inspires her loyal sons
To deeds of valour, suffering, or of death ;
With jealous care she seeks and guards their bones,
And lisps their names in every passing breath.

Edina, fence the treasure you possess
From vandal's plundering touch or foot profane ;
No grave like this can pensive hearts impress—
No tablet can our gaze so long detain.

THE END.







